



PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

AFTERNOON SESSION: 4.07 p.m. – 7.25 p.m.

Gibraltar, Wednesday, 19th February 2020

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The Gibraltar Parliament

The Parliament met at 4.07 p.m.

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. M L Farrell BEM GMD RD JP *in the Chair*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P E Martinez Esq *in attendance*]

Questions for Oral Answer

DIGITAL AND FINANCIAL SERVICES

Q141/2020

Treasury Accounting System – Effect of disruption on Departments' compliance with budgets

Clerk: Meeting of Parliament, Wednesday, 19th February 2020.

We carry on with answers to Oral Questions. We commence with Question 141. The questioner is the Hon. R M Clinton.

5

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Government please advise how accounting officers have been able to monitor compliance with their budgets, given the disruption in the operation of TAS accounting system.

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital and Financial Services.

Minister for Digital and Financial Services (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, Cloud Suite Financials (CSF) went live on 5th August 2019, replacing the Treasury Accounting System (TAS). CSF allows all Departments direct access to financial data on a live basis, thereby removing the need to manage reconciled departmental information against information held centrally, which is the case when using TAS.

Departments were able to maintain their manual vote books, and were instructed to do so on 28th November 2019 when HM Government decided to delay the implementation of CSF until 31st March 2020, in order to facilitate the preparation of forecast outturn for 2019-20 and estimates for 2020-21.

Once it was decided to continue using TAS for the preparation of the estimates, the Treasury engaged with receivers of revenue and controlling officers to provide details of receipts and payments made using CSF.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister for his answer, but can he just clarify whether I heard him correctly in terms that accounting officers were asked to keep manual records of their expenditure? (*Interjection*)

Is there a method, or some sort of mitigation system in place, whereby vote holders will get a report from Treasury showing where they are, or will they have to do some sort of internal book-keeping themselves?

What is it that they are relying on as a backstop, as a contingency measure?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the instruction to continue to use TAS was issued on 28th November when we paused 'go live', and those Departments have continued to use their vote books and have the information manually, as they did have before and during. Many did. For those that did not, there is an exercise ongoing between those Departments and Treasury to reconcile in detail, because obviously all the information is on CSF for the intervening period, which is visible to Treasury.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, I appreciate this is a fairly technical question, but is there a difference between what vote holders would have had in the past under TAS, say for the last financial year as opposed to this financial year, in terms of speed of access to information?

Is there a delay in which vote holders will get the information they will need to see whether they are over or under budget?

Is the Minister satisfied that vote holders have the information they need on a timely basis to be able to monitor against their budgets?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I answer the question by guessing, which is that I am aware that there has been some disruption. So, is it as smooth as we would like it to be? The answer is no. But am I confident that we will get to where we need to get to? Yes.

Q142/2020

Brexit –

Comments by Chairman of GFIA

Clerk: Question 142, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Is the Minister for Financial Services aware of the article published in issue 115 of the Gibraltar Olive Press reporting on the views expressed by the Chairman of the Gibraltar Funds and Investment Association (GFIA) in the context of Brexit?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital and Financial Services.

Minister for Digital and Financial Services (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, yes, I can confirm that I am aware of the article published in the Gibraltar Olive Press.

Hon. D J Bossino: It gives me the opportunity, Mr Speaker, to raise in this Parliament the article. It is entitled 'Exodus begins'. Whilst it does say some positive things about the Government's actions in this regard, and it says "the Government of Gibraltar is doing an extraordinary job in a difficult situation", (*Banging on desk*) it also highlights certain aspects which are of concern. I would be grateful for the Minister's comments in relation to this, and I would quote the following:

Brexit has been difficult on the finance industry in Gibraltar. Some companies, particularly asset management firms, have indeed left Gibraltar and some have restructured, thus minimising their Gibraltar footprint.

I would be grateful for the Minister's comments in relation to this and what plans he has in relation to trying to address these issues as best he can.

35 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, I think the work that the Deputy Chief Minister had done in
securing the extraordinary and unique facility that our financial services firms will have into the
UK is quite incredible when you come and meet people from other countries around the world
who would kill to have that sort of access. It has only been done because at early doors,
40 immediately after having done the heat map work over the first three months in 2016, we
determined that 92% of our financial services business was with the UK, and as a consequence
the target for delivering what was best for Gibraltar was that access to the United Kingdom
government.

Did we know then, as we do now, that there were going to be firms that would lose access to
the European Union? The answer is of course we did and of course we do. Therefore, what has
45 happened between 2016 and today is that those firms that are impacted upon by Brexit and will
lose access to the single market, like they would in the United Kingdom, had to make adequate
alternative arrangements, which of course they have, as they have done indeed in the UK. It
would have been irresponsible in the extreme if they had not. Consequently, those firms that
wished to seek to have access to European Union countries have made alternative
50 arrangements. Some of them are referred to by Mr Lasry in the article, some are not. There are
other sectors too.

So, I think, to answer the question fully, I would agree with what Mr Lasry says, in terms of
the extraordinary job that has been done by the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister in
securing this passporting in, and I also recognise that, because we are going to lose single market
55 access – it is a consequence of Brexit, which we do not like – firms have had to make the
arrangements they have had to, to ensure that if they want to continue that market access ...
That is what they had to do.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the response. Does he have any concerns as
60 to the possible dwindling presence of these companies in Gibraltar as a result of Brexit? Whilst
we may have secured that very important access to the UK market – because the single market
access is so important to these companies, and there are various examples which he and I have
discussed before the session, where they are readjusting their operations but nevertheless still
having a presence in Gibraltar – does he have a concern that that may not necessarily be the
65 case in the medium- to long-term future?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, the word ‘dwindling’ suggests some sort of crumbling. There is no
dwindling and there is no crumbling, but there have been consequences of Brexit. Of course
there have. Let’s not hide from the reality that it has impacted some of our businesses. We had
70 8% of our financial services market that was accessing the European Union. They cannot, so is
there going to be less than there was before? Absolutely. Are we going to have firms, in January
of next year, accessing the European Union? Today, it looks very unlikely, so will there be a loss
of that business? Yes.

Therefore, what do we have to do? We have to work twice as hard to ensure that we get
75 more business from the UK, our natural market, to more than make up for that 8%. Hence why I
have told my friend, and they will read public statements to the effect, that Gibraltar Finance
will be going to London once a month, every month, targeting law firms, accounting firms, fund
managers, insurance firms, all the different businesses, to think Gibraltar, think business in
terms of what we can do for the UK market. We had the first such week last week, which went
80 extremely well, and we will be doing the next one in March and will be carrying on all year
round, because that is the way that we will ensure that we retain that quantum of business that
we wish to see here in Gibraltar.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, just one for clarification, just so I understand where the hon.
85 Member is coming from. He said that 92% of our financial services work was coming from the
UK, loosely, and then he says 8% is business into the EU. Am I right to assume that he is actually

speaking loosely? Ninety-two and eight is a hundred, but presumably there is financial services business that is being derived from other places in the world, like Switzerland and perhaps the United States and so on. Are these actual figures, or is he speaking loosely?

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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, the hon. Gentleman seems to not bring into his consideration the information that we put into the public domain at the time, immediately after the Brexit referendum, which my hon. and learned Friend referred to, which was the heat mapping work, and that work was about work done in the European Union. The United Kingdom, in that context, was a member state of the European Union. In the context of the survey that we did, we did not ask people what work they did in Australia or in the United States. That would be unaffected by the referendum or the consequences of the referendum. We asked what work they did in the European Union: where in the European Union is your business, if it is in the European Union? And that 92 versus eight is in that context, therefore entirely about business which originated in the single market, the single market therefore then including the United Kingdom. As he will often have heard me say, we enjoyed rights of access to the United Kingdom as a market because we were a part of the single market, rights that other Overseas Territories and indeed Crown Dependencies did not enjoy because they did not go on to form part of the single market because of the choices they made in 1972 and the subsequent effects thereof.

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That is the reason why the number reaches completeness at 100%, because it was all about the whole of the European Union market as it was at that time, and will be until the end of this year because of the application of the transitional arrangements in the transition period.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Minister clarify: insofar as the monthly roadshow to the United Kingdom in order to market our jurisdiction and invite further work and generate further activity for our economy, is the Government intending on inviting the private sector to go along with the Government, in partnership with the Government insofar as those trips to London? And if the Government is so intending, which industries are they particularly targeting? Grateful.

115

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, no, we are not. At these sessions, if we were to take the private sector with us, at each firm we go and see there could be 20 or 30 of us. It is impossible to manage. So, what we have done is use the local firms, in the first stretch that we did last week, to arrange these meetings for us with firms in London. So, PwC in Gibraltar with PwC in London, KPMG EY That is the nature of the co-ordination we get from here. If PwC wanted to come with us to see PwC in London we would have no objection, but we are not opening it up to the rest of the sector. We will be organising events which will engage the rest of the sector throughout the year, not just once a year as we have done in the past.

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Q143/2020

Blockchain for Europe Summit 2020 and other events – Anticipated benefits of attending

Clerk: Question 143, the Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Digital and Financial Services advise the House what he intends to achieve by attending events such as the Blockchain for Europe Summit 2020?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital and Financial Services.

130 **Minister for Digital and Financial Services (Hon. A J Isola):** Mr Speaker, we aim to promote Gibraltar's position as a leading centre for blockchain business by interaction with attendees, media and other relevant representative individuals, and the organisation that arranged the conference. The speakers included private, public and political entities.

135 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, there is a full report of the hon. Member's visit in the *Gibraltar Chronicle*.

I think this question in some respects arises from the answers that he gave us in response to our supplementaries. Given that, as he rightly points out, most of our business, if not pretty much all of the business, is UK based and the effect that Brexit is having on that, it begs the question: what is the point of going to the centre of Europe in order to try and drum up business there if we do not have single market access? It is that point that I would be grateful if the Hon. Minister could address in his reply.

145 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, the development of our thinking in the DLT framework that we introduced in 2017 ... We engage with the European Parliament. We have a lot of friends there in the blockchain space specifically and they have been very useful to us in how our thinking has evolved and where we have got to, and we continue to engage with them. The Co-Chair of the Blockchain Unit for the European Parliament is somebody we know well and whom we bounce ideas off, and we continue that engagement.

150 But the European Parliament, when it does this work in these conferences ... It is not simply EU firms that are there. The whole world is there. There are firms there from the US, from Asia, because everyone is engaging. Sat next to me on the panel was the MD of IBM Blockchain. These are international organisations who engage with the EU. The EU actually is quite far behind in terms of its blockchain thinking. The amount that they quantify blockchain business to be within the European Union is 5% – with 60% in Asia, 20% in the US and 5% in the EU – and the bulk of that is in London, but a lot of the thinking ... Actually, it is very useful to be involved in the process, so the ideas that we have coming next ... we are engaging with the experts in the European Union and some friends we have there to gather more thinking, more intelligence, more information on the direction that we want to go through. So, it is a very useful interaction with all sorts and we have had some very good follow-ups as a result of it.

165 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, can I ask the Minister to confirm ... Can I take it from his reply that the intention is to continue with these meetings, despite the onset of Brexit?

And if I may also ask a further supplementary attached to that, because I am sure he will be able to answer the first one quite quickly: would the possible trade deal that the UK is negotiating on behalf of the entire UK family – which includes Gibraltar – with the EU have an impact on the details he has given in his reply?

170 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, the meetings, whenever of benefit to Gibraltar, will continue – of course they will – so, if we believe that there is something of positive return for our private sector or our economy, then of course we will.

In respect of the trade deal, anything that we can do to enhance and strengthen the current suite of resources available to Gibraltar firms, the better – so, hopefully, yes.

Q144-46/2020

**Moneyval –
Update**

Clerk: Question 144, the Hon. D J Bossino.

175

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Financial Services provide an update following the on-site visit by the Moneyval committee of experts to Gibraltar last year?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital and Financial Services.

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Minister for Digital and Financial Services (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 145 and 146.

Clerk: Question 145, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Do the initial drafts of the Moneyval report show Gibraltar demonstrating systemic failures as a jurisdiction, or is Government satisfied with the findings of this report?

Clerk: Question 146, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Can Government explain the reason for the delay in publishing the Moneyval report?

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Mr Speaker, if I may – I am sure the hon. Gentleman understands that I think that I can speak for the hon. Gentleman on my right as well – I think these questions were published and put through before the report came out, so they might look a little dated now.

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Digital and Financial Services.

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Minister for Digital and Financial Services (Hon. A J Isola): Mr Speaker, the timing of the report obviously has got absolutely nothing to do with the Government. The Government received the final report at the same time as everybody else, on the website, so I hope that the hon. Lady has not drawn an inference that we published it after the questions had arrived. It is totally out of our control.

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In connection to the update following the visit by the Moneyval committee, as well as whether Government is satisfied with the findings of the report, I refer the hon. Member to Government Press Release 80/2020 dated Wednesday, 12th February 2020.

The Moneyval report was published on Wednesday, 12th February 2020. The timing of publication rested entirely with the Moneyval Secretariat and its own procedures.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, just for the sake of the record, the public will understand that we filed these questions within a certain time period before the meeting of Parliament and then we were clearly overtaken by events, and it so happened that the report was in fact published. So, in many respects some of our questions have become irrelevant, but with Mr Speaker's permission I would be grateful if we could ask some supplementaries in relation to the report.

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He mentions having seen the report – the final report I think he talks about – when it was published. Can he advise this House if he received a draft of the report in advance of the publication of the final report? Is that something that the Government gets to see before? In other words, the Government, as I understand it, does not actually see a final report at the same time as the rest of us. Is that something which he can share with the House?

220

225 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, the Government, and indeed the entire working group, receives draft reports at various stages and is actually able to comment on them, which of course we have over a quite lengthy procedure. What happens is that the report is highly confidential and therefore not to go outside of that working group under any circumstances at all. There have been other jurisdictions that have been scorned by an early publication and we took the view that we would comply with their request and maintain it confidential in the manner that they requested, so that is exactly what we did.

230 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, if I may ask a supplementary or two. We knew that Moneyval were conducting their assessment a while back and we had plenty of time to fix our anti-money laundering problems. Would the Government concede that more could have been done to avoid the result that transpired?

235 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, simply on a point of order, and I do not want to spoil my hon. Friend's flow here but it was my question and presumably I get to complete my supplementaries and then it goes on to the hon. Member. I had not quite finished my supplementaries, but I am willing to ...

240 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** I thought you had finished.

Hon. D J Bossino: No, that is fine.

245 Mr Speaker, I have had an opportunity ... not to read the entire report, I must confess. It is 250 pages long and I have not had an opportunity yet to read it. I have read the key findings and it was based on the key findings and the Government's press release that I was able to react on behalf of the Opposition within hours after receiving notice that this document had been published.

250 Can I ask the Minister: what is, in effect, in the Government's gift that it can do to improve our ratings for when ... I think the next updating report is going to happen in 2021? It seems that, as far as direct state action is concerned, we have passed with flying colours in the sense that it speaks very highly of the legislative framework and work that has been done in relation to that, and for that I think we need to congratulate the Government – and I would say ourselves as a Parliament for having passed with good grades, so to speak. But is there anything else which the Government can do, presumably by provision of resources to GFIU and entities like that, 255 which would improve our ratings; or indeed, I would have thought, by educating and fostering education and training in relation to the various pockets where the experts who looked at us felt that we were lacking and lagging behind in?

260 **Hon. A J Isola:** Mr Speaker, I think the question is a good one, in the sense of that there more that Government could do. A part of the effectiveness test is have we made enough arrests. To prove a negative is difficult at the best of times. And if you do not have sufficient, is it because you have not put in sufficient resources, or is it because the people who are doing it are not good enough? So, it is not an easy thing to go through, but what we have done ...

265 Do not forget, as the press release states, our entry into Moneyval was at our request. This is not a process of catching people out or scolding people; this is a process of ensuring that more and more countries raise their standards to fight terrorist financing and money laundering.

270 They have a huge amount to say about how well we have done in the limited period of time that we have been working on this, which is two and a half years, to put ourselves in the shape that we have put ourselves in. But of course the evaluation is over a period of four years when for the first two years some of the data that we would have liked to have had we did not have available to us. So, I have absolutely no doubt that, moving forward, we will get better and better and score better and better, but we have to recognise that, as such a small jurisdiction, some of the effective mechanisms that we are asked to meet are difficult because they require

international co-operation, international arrests and international confiscation orders, which are
275 not necessarily easy for small jurisdictions like ours.

We have put in place a remediation programme, which in some instances does include some
more resources. We have already been congratulated for the resources we have put in, but we
need to go a little bit further in certain limited instances. And in terms of the technical
assessment, in which we did very well, there are a couple of minor details that we are working
280 on with the drafters to ensure that we bring those fully up to speed too.

If you read the report you would gather from it that actually we have done very well, but if
you look at the scoring on the effectiveness it does not quite paint the same picture, which is
unfortunate; but as I said, this is about improving the standards that we have available to us to
ensure that we meet the international standards that countries now require and expect, and we
285 will do our part to ensure that we do.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, I have got a specific question, but just simply to make the
comment by way of preamble that from the very brief research I have done on their website it
seems that the bar is very high and there are other jurisdictions who have done not particularly
290 well out of this, jurisdictions which you would expect would have done a lot better, so I think we
need to acknowledge that the bar is very high.

He talks about certain limited circumstances where he says perhaps further resources can be
applied and further assistance can be provided by the Government. Can he expand on that at all
across the floor of the House, or is it something he would rather not do at this stage?
295

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I would rather not go into the detailed remediation programme
across the floor of Parliament, but I am very happy to have a session with the hon. Member, and
indeed the hon. Lady, and talk them through the different aspects of what we are doing and why
we are doing it.

I think it is appropriate at this stage to say a huge thank you to all the public sector
authorities, agencies and Departments that have worked very closely with us. A lot of private
sector engagement also had to be done – they were also assessed – and so my thanks to them. I
have written to all of them thanking them, but I think it is important now to recognise the work
that they have done. We may not have had the result that we wanted, but I think we have done
300 extremely well and will continue to improve with the support of all the different parties
involved.
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Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): Mr Speaker, before the hon. Lady rises, if I might just, in a
rash of conviviality which seems to have broken out, also add the Government's thanks to the
310 hon. Gentleman for the attitude that he took in response to the Government press release and
this publication, because we thought on this side of the House that it was responsible and it was
measured. We do not often react to each other in that way, but I think it was clear that the
Government here had led in submitting Gibraltar to this assessment because it was right that we
should understand, warts and all, where we were doing well and where we had to improve, and
315 that we should be open about that when the time came. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman knows we
were congratulated for our legislation. Others who might crow at the fact that there was some
criticism of us were later criticised for not even having their legislation in place.

This is something that should not be an area of partisan dispute between us and the hon.
Gentleman approached his response to our press release and the publication in a way that I
320 thought commendable – and as I would have risen to tell him if I thought it was not, I thought it
was right that I should rise and tell him that I did.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady.

325 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, as I think most of us are still trawling through the
250 pages and trying to extrapolate some clarity over it, one of the things that I seem to see
repeatedly is that the report shows many discrepancies between technical competencies and
their execution, and it is a question I would put to Government: why are there so many
discrepancies?

330 Why are we considering that the report has come out in flying colours, as many Members of
Parliament are saying across the floor, when at the same time there are many concerns that
come out of this report in general?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, I think the hon. Lady is being a little bit harsh and unfair on the
335 sterling work that has been put into this by so many different people from all our Police,
Customs, GFIU and indeed the private sector.

I do not understand what she means by 'discrepancies'. I think that there is no question, and
it is recognised in our press release, that there is more work to be done; we accept that. But I do
not understand what the hon. Lady means by 'technical discrepancies'. There are issues that we
340 need to do more with – we accept that, we say so in our press release – and the intention and
desire of this work is to get better, so I do not believe it is appropriate to criticise where we have
room for improvement, because we acknowledge that we do.

Mr Speaker: Can I ask whether the hon. Lady wishes to ...?

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I would appreciate, actually, to have some time
with the Minister and in due course to propose some questions in a constructive spirit before
forming a public opinion on this.

Thank you.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, just one question insofar as a response to the Hon.
Mr Bossino's question relating to resources. I would specifically ask the Minister in relation to
what the Government intends on doing to resource the prosecuting authorities in respect of the
criticism that we were faced with in Moneyval. Is there any intention to improve that resourcing
355 specifically, given the criticism contained in the report?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, that is part of the remediation that we are discussing with the
Police, with the Gibraltar Law Offices and with Customs in terms that we have now identified
what each of the Departments believes it requires to do within the time period to remediate,
360 and those are the discussions we will be having with the Chief Minister very shortly to conclude.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, just a very short supplementary. When we applied to join
Moneyval we required the resolution of the Council of Europe. How will this work post Brexit?
Forgive me if I do not know the answer to this as I stand. Is Moneyval a standalone organisation,
365 or does it come under the European umbrella – in which case, what happens post Brexit?

Hon. A J Isola: Mr Speaker, my understanding is that Moneyval has members from across the
world, not just the European Union, obviously, and although it is a unit which is managed from
the Council of Europe, it also implements FATF standards, which is where the evaluation really
370 comes from. So, it is not solely a European Union institution. There are other ... OECD, FATF ...
These are all ... I was going to call them quangos, but that may be rude ... that work together to
deliver some of these issues.

HEALTH AND CARE

Q131/2020

Advocacy Council for Health Services Users –
Frequency of meetings

Clerk: We now move back to Question 131 and the questioner is the Hon. E J Phillips.

375 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state how many meetings of the Advocacy Council for Health Services Users have been conducted since it was established, and what was the date of the last meeting?

380 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and Care.

Minister for Health and Care (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, the Advocacy Council for Health Services Users has held seven meetings. The last meeting was held on 3rd April 2019.

385 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, is there a reason why a significant period of time, in my view, has passed since the April date in 2019 where the Council has not met?

I preface that, of course, that this is an important organisation which combines many health organisations in our community and I am just wondering why it has been so long since they have sat down to meet. Is it just diary commitments, or is there something else that we do not know about? I am grateful.

390 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, I need to say that this Council is not a statutory body or committee; this is something which was set up with the previous Minister for Health in an attempt to try to consolidate all the different requests for meetings from the different associations, charities and organisations who requested meetings to try to discuss or contribute as to where we can find improvements in the service. In the meantime, my doors have been open to all those same organisations to see me on a one-to-one basis, which is how it was begun with the previous Minister. As yet, very few of these organisations have actually requested a meeting.

400 It is something that I was not entirely aware of because it was not something which was constituted; it was something which was between the Minister at the time and the different associations. It was chaired by either himself on a few occasions and also by the lead in the Primary Care Centre.

405 My intention is to hold one of these meetings to see exactly the benefits. I have heard that it can be beneficial. It gives them all a platform to be able to discuss their common issues. It does not give them necessarily a good platform for them to discuss their separate issues, because each organisation may have their own things that they want to mention. The intention is that I will be arranging one of these meetings to see the perceived relevance of it and then take a decision from then on.

Q132/2020

Dispensary stores –
Staffing

410 **Clerk:** Question 132, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Does Government have enough staff to man the dispensary stores during regular opening hours in the case of staff being off sick?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and Care.

415 **Minister for Health and Care (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, yes, the dispensary stores are adequately staffed. As with any department, if staff are absent for any reason, then all efforts are made to provide cover by deploying other staff members in order to continue with operational services.

420 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, the reason why I asked this question – I have to declare an interest – was because I actually went to the stores on 29th January and there was a poster that said ‘Pharmacy stores closed today due to staff sickness. Sorry for any inconvenience this may cause.’

425 My concern is what is the impact on the patient when there is a member of staff who is sick and the stores close – and I think they only open a couple of days a week anyway. How does this affect the quality of care on the patient and what recourse is there for a patient who would need medication or equipment and finds himself or herself with a closed door?

430 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, sod’s law dictates that the hon. Lady was there on that particular day. Yes, she is absolutely right, there was an issue on that particular day but that issue has not happened, as far as I am aware, in the past or ever since. But there was an issue in that there were people off sick and they needed to close the stores.

435 I will mention that the dispensary stores deal with the general public only for a few items, for example for the giving of stoma bags and leg bags, but generally they supply the wards and the clinics; so, if there is a need for medication or items, they have access to the store should it be required.

440 But the reality is that other than in unforeseen circumstances ... and there has been, as far as I am aware, just one single occasion and that was the one that the hon. Lady mentions. Other than that, nothing has been reported to me that affects the care of patients in any of these situations.

445 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, I really do not want to get pedantic, but unfortunately I am always the one who comes up with sod’s law issues, because a few months ago I brought up the issue of and how there were not staff in and I was told that they must have gone on a toilet break, and now it seems to be the only day that they were off.

450 It seems like a recurring issue that I am always bringing up the one-offs, (*Interjection*) and I would put it respectfully to the hon. Gentleman that there seems to be an issue of lack of staff and perhaps the Government should just face it and ensure to plug the holes for the benefit of the patient and the user.

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, on the contrary, I think there has been a huge increase in the number of staff generally within the GHA.

455 There are times, unfortunately, when we have issues. We cannot for one moment expect that people will not go off sick or that people will not be on toilet breaks. I cannot say it does not happen; I just cannot say ... I would say this, she is really unlucky – or very lucky in that respect because she can bring it to my attention in Parliament.

Q133-34/2020
Cardiac care –
Provision of facilities

Clerk: Question 133, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Does the Government have plans to fund and provide a cardiac cath lab at the GHA?
460

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and Care.

Minister for Health and Care (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 134.
465

Clerk: Question 134, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Does the Government have plans to increase funding to provide a specialist cardiac centre for the GHA?
470

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and Care.

Minister for Health and Care (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, the Government is committed to providing a specialist cardiac centre incorporating a cardiac catheter laboratory, to perform emergency angiograms and cardiac stenting for patients having suffered heart attacks and/or angina. This will be led by our newly appointed interventional cardiologist.
475

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, that sounds like great news. Does the Hon. Minister have a planned delivery date for this project?
480

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I would be loath to give a date which I am then held to.

We are firmly committed to this. We have employed this interventional cardiologist for this very reason. He is a gentleman who has experience in setting up cath labs in his jurisdiction and we have employed him specifically to do the same for us in Gibraltar.
485

We set a date in our manifesto, on which there will be slippage because we are actually looking at the different equipment and we are doing thorough research, which the interventional cardiologist is leading on, but we hope ... Again, I do not really want to give a date, but it is a firm commitment from this Government.
490

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, just on that, obviously we welcome any degree of repatriation of services that can be rolled out here locally but if there is going to be an interventional cardiologist, presumably that person might be undertaking things that would hitherto have been done somewhere else – like, for example, St Mary's and so on, angiograms and stents etc. – and presumably that person would require specialist surgical nursing team backup. What is the Government planning in that regard, in terms of ensuring that that interventional cardiologist has the appropriate backup team to provide those services?
495

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, the interventional cardiologist will not be a one-man band. He will be provided with exactly the right expertise to be able to carry out his duties. He is an expert in his field, he is a person who has a lot of experience in setting up these cath labs abroad, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that this will not be a one-man band. It will be very well researched. He is leading in that research and seeing what is the best equipment to make sure,
500

and obviously the best staffing requirements we shall require and whether we need to train
505 people to be able to assist him. He can rest assured in that respect.

Hon. K Azopardi: Really, what I was asking the hon Member, and I am grateful for the
response, but I appreciate that he is not doing this single handedly and he needs a specialist
510 backup team.

My question really was: in the initial phases, is the specialist backup team coming with him,
or is it that you are training local staff up to a certain level before the rollout of these services?

Hon. P J Balban: Mr Speaker, I have not specifically asked that question but the reality is that,
as far as I am aware, we will try to train our local team, our local nursing staff, to be able to
515 assist this gentleman. There will be training required. Whether this training can be done locally
in Gibraltar or whether they need to be trained elsewhere I would need to find out to give him a
specific reply to that question.

Q135/2020
MRI scanning –
Provision of facilities

Clerk: Question 135, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

520 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Does the Government have plans to fund and provide an MRI
machine for the GHA?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and Care.

525 **Minister for Health and Care (Hon. P J Balban):** Mr Speaker, the Government at present is
exploring all possible options for the provision of MRI services in Gibraltar.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, when the hon. Gentleman says that they are
exploring possibilities, is it something that they want to get done or is it a possible acquisition,
530 because of course I think it makes the difference to patients' effectively time-sensitive crucial
issues, the drive to Malaga meaning life or death. I totally acknowledge the good intentions of
Government and that we have not had it before, because we simply have not, and we are trying
to improve, but obviously, because it is such a life or death thing, I would like to know how much
of a priority this is going to be for Government and for the Government budget.

535 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, just to correct the hon. Lady, patients requiring an MRI scan
actually go to Algeciras and not Malaga.

This is actually a manifesto commitment, where we said that we would bring MRI home to
Gibraltar. We are looking at which is the best way, the most effective way, to bring MRI to
540 Gibraltar. Obviously MRI diagnostic equipment is extremely expensive and there are a lot of
different types of MRI machines, different brands, so we are exploring all options as to whether
it is best suited and where the machine equipment is best placed.

That is why I am saying MRI is coming home but at the moment we are not sure as to where
and what form it will take.

Q136-40/2020

Urology services –

**Number of consultants; vacant posts; on-call services;
primary location of referrals outside Gibraltar; cost of referrals to Spain**

545 **Clerk:** Question 136, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: How many consultants have we had working in Urology within the GHA since last April, 2019?

550 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and Care.

Minister for Health and Care (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Questions 137 to 140.

555 **Clerk:** Question 137, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: How many urology consultant posts exist within the GHA and how many are vacant?

560 **Clerk:** Question 138, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: How many nights a week is there no local on-call urology consultant cover in the GHA?

565 **Clerk:** Question 139, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Which hospital outside of Gibraltar is the main benefactor of our referrals for urology-related services in the last two years?

570 **Clerk:** Question 140, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: How much has the Gibraltar taxpayer spent in the last 12 months on urology referrals/services to Spain?

575 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Health and Care.

Minister for Health and Care (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, the GHA has had eight consultants working in urology since April 2019.

580 Two consultant urologist posts exist within the GHA, both of which are currently vacant. However, this service is covered by locum consultants.

There has never been a dedicated on-call urology service at the GHA. All patients requiring urgent treatment after hours are seen by the surgical consultants, who offer on-call services. The consultant urologist forms part of this team and is on call on a one-in-three-week basis.

The main centre for external urology-related services has been Genesiscare.

585 The total cost of urology services in Spain for 2019 was £352,524.17.

590 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, the reason why I have asked these questions is because I wonder whether the Minister is aware of localised issues. From what I have been told, things like testicular torsion, for example, are often being left to be treated by general consultants, who do not have the speciality and do not feel comfortable trying to resolve such a specialised medical issue, which is of course a urological one. And from what I understand, when

a general consultant does not want to treat it, for fear of not getting it right, the patient has to be rushed to Spain and the delay in time can very well result in testicular loss. This is just one example of the danger of not having a specialist urologist at hand, which is my understanding.

595 In light of this reality, would the Government agree that we are in need of a round-the-clock urology cover consultant, and would it be minded to have plans to provide this cover?

I have to help you guys – and I don't have an interest! (*Interjections and laughter*)

600 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, I am not an expert in testicular torsion to be able to know whether it is treated by urologists or not, but there is a urologist available. It might not be at that very moment in time. If you appear at A&E with your testicles – (*Laughter*) with testicular torsion, at a certain time, you will have to wait until (*Interjections*) the next day to be seen. It is not that we do not have urologists. We have urologists and at the moment they are being covered by locum urologists. That is how the service is being provided at the moment, but as a
605 temporary measure.

Whether there could have been issues of leave and there was an unfortunate case of testicular torsion that needed to be referred to Spain, that again can happen. I have no evidence of that, but the service is being covered at present.

610 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, why have the two posts that exist not been filled in the last however many months?

615 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, there are a few reasons why. It is not that they have not been filled; the process is on its way. We have already engaged and agreed to employ a new consultant. When you employ a new consultant urologist, they cannot just jump on a plane and come over to Gibraltar; they need to give a certain amount of time and inform their employer. We have one consultant who will be starting, I think, in May. In the interim period in March there will be more interviews for the second urologist.

620 We had a urologist in Gibraltar who was apparently revered and very well liked. Unfortunately, that person had to leave Gibraltar for family issues. We found ourselves in a situation where we did not want to lose his services and we tried – I tried, personally – to see whether he would be prepared to stay on a bit longer until we could bridge that gap, but unfortunately his specific circumstances meant that he had to leave. In the interim I think we have covered it adequately and the process has continued to ensure that in months to come we
625 will have our full complement of two urologists in the GHA.

630 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** Mr Speaker, there have been eight urologists since April 2019, according to the Minister. Is the Minister aware that this turns out to be a critical issue for both patients and doctors, in the sense that doctors have felt burnt out, many having to take over patients who were not theirs? I understand the continuity of care has been weak because of the turnover, and there is a big impact on the patient, as well as on the doctors who have had to take these cases and are feeling burnt out and uncomfortable with the cases that they have had to take over.

635 Is the Minister aware and concerned by this lack of continuity by this burnout? And is he therefore making sure that this turns out to be a priority, in terms of appointing new urologists who will have comfortable enough conditions that they will stay and not leave as often as we have seen?

640 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, 'burnt out' is a term that the hon. Lady is using. I have not heard anything at all that would seem to suggest that the urologists are burnt out. In fact, the urologist who was so well liked in Gibraltar did not want to leave; he was extremely happy. He left for personal reasons, family reasons.

There have been other issues with the urologists, and the moment that you have one of the two posts missing, you have a sequential changeover of locums to try to cover those two posts. They have been covered short term because the intention was that we would employ someone substantive, so that is why there has been a changeover. And not only that: when you have one urologist, he is also entitled to annual leave, even perhaps extended sick leave – I am speculating about the sick leave, but definitely annual leave – and then it is important that the GHA has some sort of cover, and this is what has been done and on occasion the cover has come from the hospitals that we work with as part of the GHA.

ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Q147/2020

Miss Gibraltar 2020 pageant– Engagement of organiser

Clerk: We now move to Question 147. The questioner is the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, can Government inform this House who has been engaged to organise the 2020 Miss Gibraltar pageant and if such contract awarded is as a result of a tender process?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, Gibraltar Cultural Services, whose immediate precursor was the Cultural Agency, which was contracted by the GSD Government to run cultural services in Gibraltar, will not be tendering for the organisation of the 2020 Miss Gibraltar pageant. GCS will organise the event itself.

Hon. E J Reyes: Mr Speaker, is GCS then subcontracting others to take part in actually producing this show, such as the Minister has said has now become their responsibility?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, GCS has a large amount of expertise available. Some will be subcontracted to different local entities, but the main organisation and so on will be done by GCS itself.

Clerk: Question 148, the Hon. –

Hon. R M Clinton: Sorry, Mr Speaker. Can I ask the Minister: is the organisation of this pageant included within their normal contractual terms, or will GCS receive additional payment for organising Miss Gibraltar?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Mr Speaker, that is included.

Q148/2020

**Electric vehicle charging points –
Consultation with stakeholders**

Clerk: Question 148, the Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm that it has commenced consultation with stakeholders in respect of electric vehicle charging points and when it is expected to report to the House on the outcome of that consultation?

680

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, Government put out a call for expressions of interest, following which a number of suppliers were identified. Potential sites have also been identified and discussions are being held with the suppliers with a view to rolling these out.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the answer and I think it answers the question in relation to the expressions of interest, but I believe that the GSLP's manifesto presented to the electorate at the election promised consultation with stakeholders and I was specifically asking about that, rather than the expressions of interest from people who wanted the job per se. I was wondering what steps the Government have taken to go out to the public in relation to electrical charging points.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, at the moment, other than being always available to hear comments, and having had discussions recently with environmental NGOs in which only last week I met, as I often do, with ESG, and we discussed that as well as a range of other items, we have also held discussions with some of the suppliers of vehicles so we know what the industry thinks about this.

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So, yes, there have been discussions on this and they will be ongoing as we roll out the programme. Obviously, internal discussions with my friend and colleague and his Ministry for Traffic and Transport will also continue.

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Q149/2020

**Contracted Services Culture–
Breakdown of cost in approved Estimates**

Clerk: Question 149, the Hon. K Azopardi.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, what were the 'Contracted Services Culture' in head 44(5)(a) of the approved Estimates which were expected to cost £2.65 million in financial year 2019-20, breaking down the contracts by contractor and cost, if more than one?

705

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, these are the services which, as a result of arrangements entered into with its precursor the Cultural Agency created by the party the hon. Member now leads, are provided by Gibraltar Cultural Services.

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715 **Hon. K Azopardi:** So that is one entity with one contractual situation – is that how I have understood the hon. Member? And if so, what are the services provided? Can he just illuminate us?

720 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, Gibraltar Cultural Services oversees the organisation and co-ordination of cultural events for Gibraltar. I have a long list of items for example: New Year celebrations and fireworks; Young Artists Art Competition and Exhibition; Drama Festival; logo competition for the Spring Festival; Short Story Competition; Spring Art Competition; Miss Gibraltar pageant; Spring Festival; Four Zarzuelas or up to Four Zarzuelas; Book Crossing Days; Calentita nights; Summer Nights; Gibraltar Fair rides, pavilions and stalls; National Week
725 celebrations; National Week Classical Concert; Eve of National Day Rock Concert; National Day celebrations; International Art Competition and Exhibition; Poetry Competition; Autumn Cultural Programme; other exhibitions; Literary Festival, in conjunction with the Tourist Board; Cultural Events website; World Book Day; Cultural Arts Exchange; Workers' Memorial Day; May Day
730 celebration; Christmas Festival of Lights; Christmas attractions; New Year Classical Concert; Youth Arts Jamboree; Three Kings Cavalcade; art residency; Cultural Development Programme; cultural awards; Magic Festival; and World Music Festival etc.

A Member: And many more to come!

735 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** And many more to come!

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): All in one breath!

740 **Hon. K Azopardi:** I am glad that was a predictable supplementary!

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, it was!

745 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Does the Minister also have on his yellow piece of paper when the contract will come to an end?

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, Mr Speaker, I do not have it on the yellow piece of paper, but I will clearly give him the information. If he writes to me, I will write back and give him that information without any problem.

Q45/2020

Collection and treatment of waste/recycling – Replacement of refuse lorries

750 **Clerk:** We go back to Question 45. The Hon. K Azopardi.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, has the Government considered replacing the refuse lorries with trucks that will make recycling and separate treatment of waste more possible?

755 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, this is currently not an option for Gibraltar.

760 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Perhaps the Minister could explain – yes, as he waves his yellow piece of paper with lots of writing on it – why that is not an option for Gibraltar.

765 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Yes, Mr Speaker, there are a number of reasons and there are two main reasons for this. This is the way that we deal with the urban, normally known as ‘household’ waste and recycling. They are done by two different entities and they go to different locations. So, having one vehicle that would do both would not make sense unless we completely restructured the way we do this. It is not impossible to do, but at the moment we do not think it is something that we should be doing at this point in time.

770 The other reason is that these vehicles tend to be larger. We already have problems in finding vehicles to deal with refuse that will fit through our streets, particularly our narrower streets, and we do not think there is anything in the market in any case that would serve Gibraltar from the point of view of size. Those are the two main reasons, Mr Speaker.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the answer.

775 In terms of the second aspect, if I may, the reason I put the question was because in a recent visit to England I saw a refuse lorry – which was about the same size as the refuse lorries here – which had separate side containers for different articles, be it plastic or glass or cardboard and so on, and they seemed to be collecting for treatment holistically in one vehicle, which I thought might be an interesting option for the Government. But I certainly take on board what the hon. Member says in respect of the first aspect.

780 Is this something that the Hon. Minister discards or does he think that, as a foreseeable objective, it might be convenient for Gibraltar?

785 **Hon. Prof. J E Cortes:** Mr Speaker, I always like to keep looking at options for improving the service we provide in relation to both recyclable waste and non- ... less-recyclable waste. I do not dare say ‘non-recyclable’ waste.

790 It is something that could be looked at. It would mean major changes, for example, in the domestic refuse cubicles, because people do not normally segregate there. We encourage people to take their recyclables to the recycling point, but it is certainly something that could be looked at. But it also would mean that we have to restructure, as I said earlier, where we take the different types of waste.

Also, from the point of view of size, it can be deceiving because even the vehicles that we have here I believe have had to have some alterations made in order to allow them to be useful in Gibraltar. If he sees any vehicle which he thinks would work and he wants to share the information, certainly it is something that we would look into.

Q150/2020

Dogs –

Number registered in Gibraltar; provision of dedicated area

795 **Clerk:** We return to Question 150. The Hon. K Azopardi.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, how many registered dogs were there in Gibraltar in the year ending 2019?

800 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 151.

Clerk: Question 151, the Hon. K Azopardi.

805

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, when does Government intend to establish areas for people to take their dogs?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change.

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Mr Speaker, there were 4,039 dogs registered in Gibraltar in 2019.

There are areas where people can take their dogs – and, if I may depart from the prepared answer, you can walk down most streets, for example. But there are areas in various parts of Gibraltar, including areas at Europa Point – including some of the new areas that we have recently refurbished – the area of Alameda Gardens east of Grand Parade and, provided they are on a lead, the Upper Rock. Additional areas specifically set out for dogs will include an area at Little Bay and one of the new Queensway parks.

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Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I am grateful. When he says one of the Queensway parks, does he mean –?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: One of the new ones.

Hon. K Azopardi: One of the new ones in the area where the old generating –?

825

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: One of the new ones which featured in our manifesto in the area of Romney car park, just off Wellington Front.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Can I ask a supplementary, if I may, Mr Speaker?

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the dog park that they made with all the little white stones is actually not really fit for purpose because the dogs cannot even walk across them?

830

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: Yes, Mr Speaker, that is due for some work in order to improve it. But people are of the wrong impression. People believe that they can only walk their dogs along that narrow path at the top, but dogs are allowed throughout the area, including the wide path which is just above Grand Parade. When dog owners realise that, they are often down there rather than at the top.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Maybe the Hon. Minister would put some signs to that effect, to alert people – or doesn't he want to encourage too many dogs?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: No, no problem with encouraging dogs there. I was under the impression that signs had been put up initially. This is a couple of years ago. It may be that they were and they have been removed, or maybe they were not. But certainly I would be very happy to look into that, to reassure dog owners that they can use that area.

845

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, if I may enquire of the Minister: when he refers to the Little Bay site, does he envisage it being set up as a dog park where dogs can be let off the leash, as well as the informal facility that was enjoyed up near Lathbury Barracks?

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Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: This is being designed as a dog park proper.

Hon. R M Clinton: And does the Minister have a timeframe in which it might become available?

855

Hon. Prof. J E Cortes: The works at Little Bay promenade are progressing. I need to be updated. We are hoping that it will be ready before the summer. That is the plan.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, UTILITIES AND THE PORT

**Q152/2020
Scholarship debts –
Legal proceedings**

Clerk: Question 152, the Hon. E J Reyes.

860 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Further to the answers provided to QW23/2019 and QW11/2020, can Government provide details of any legal proceedings it is currently processing in respect of debtors who are failing to make repayments?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

865

Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, there are no legal proceedings currently taking place in respect of scholarship debts.

870 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Mr Speaker, I note that in the answer provided to QW23, some debtors are quite new accruing the debt within the academic year 2019-20, with no repayment plans in place. One, for example is over the £20,000 mark. There is another student also in the same year with £15,000 and another one from the year before with £15,000. So there are some who owe substantial sums of money, and some unfortunately even go back – although the figure may not be as big as that – to financial or academic year 1989-90.

875 Does it not seem unfair to the Minister that those who have entered into repayment agreements and are faithfully paying according to what they agreed upon should end up meeting their contractual obligation to reimburse the Government money, while others are not being chased up, or at least no legal proceedings are being taken? The system does not seem to be fair or equally applied to all.

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Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, it is certainly not the case that these people are not being chased up, which is a totally different thing to whether legal proceedings are afoot or not.

885 If the hon. Member has a list which goes back to some historical debts, I am sure the hon. Member will understand there will be some difficulty in recovering the truly historical debts, but in respect of the more recent debts going back 10 or 12 years, from the list that the hon. Member has the vast majority of those have repayment agreements and are actually paying. I have counted roughly, going back 10 to 12 years, about 130 debtors, of whom just over a hundred seem to have agreements and are paying regularly.

890 The hon. Member refers to recent debts from the year 2019-20 and some of the amounts and asks whether it is unfair that they should not pay when others do pay. It is certainly our intention that everybody who is a debtor should pay and should be chased, but there is a process. The process, as the hon. Member will know from his time at the Department of Education, starts at the Department of Education with contact and chasing the individual, seeking a repayment plan and an agreement from that person to pay. If that does not happen,
895 for whatever reason, because the person is not co-operative or cannot be contacted, the matter will eventually be referred to the Central Arrears Unit of the Government, which deals with not just these debts but other debts owed to the Government, and there is a mechanism in place whereby emails or letters will be sent and repayment plans will be sought to be put in place.

900 Eventually, there will come a time when consideration may have to be given to the possibility of legal proceedings, and I am told that what happens – and what Members will expect to happen – is that pre-action letters will be sent giving people a certain amount of time in order to come up either with the payment or an agreement to pay.

I can reassure the hon. Member that it is certainly our intention that everybody should pay or have an agreement to pay. It is certainly wrong and I agree entirely with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member that if somebody owes £15,000 or £20,000 and somebody else owes £10,000 or £12,000 and is repaying faithfully, somebody else who owes a similar amount or a greater amount should get away with not paying.

905 So, every effort will certainly be made, but the ones in particular that the hon. Member refers to are the most recent debts. I do not have specific details on each and every debt, but I can assure the Hon. Member that every effort will be made so that debts are repaid.

Hon. E J Reyes: I am grateful for the reassurance of the Minister that we are chasing this up. He can certainly count on my support for that, not just as an ex-Member of the Department of Education but certainly as a Member of this Parliament and someone who would like to see fairness being introduced.

915 I can give the Minister some food for thought. In the same way that the Ministry for Housing has to take certain actions in respect of all those who owe rent arrears and so on, that is something for Government to consider in its wider view.

At this particular stage I think I am not going to enter into the minor details of that. I will leave that for a future occasion, if need be. The answer the Minister gave me was quite comprehensive and referred to all those. Rightly so, he does not identify the students and just puts a number. Because of the different figures involved, as an educator one can guess the type of course. Some have small debts and some – medicine, for example – tend to be quite a high cost. I think the Minister is nodding yes. If need be, we can meet one day behind the Speaker's Chair and take that.

925 I therefore sit down, Mr Speaker. I think one of my colleagues would like to ask a further supplementary.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, just one question, if I may.

930 In relation to the Minister's answer, hasn't it long been the Government's policy that, insofar as students who are unable to meet those payments because of either mental health or physical health issues that have led to them leaving higher education studies in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, the Government has taken the view that those amounts should be waived in the interests of those particular students, given that they have demonstrated a physical or mental health complaint, but obviously after a rigorous process by the Government to establish that that is in fact the case?

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, it is not the case that those debts are waived. The case is that those amounts simply do not become debts. They are not considered debts. The amounts in the list that I have previously provided to the hon. Member do not include the circumstances which the hon. Member describes, and those are specific categories of reasons.

940 The contract between the Government and the student, which is backed up by a guarantor usually, will have certain provisions as to repayment in the event that the student does not complete the course. Certainly in the case where there are medical reasons, mental health or physical health problems, provided that that is supported by medical evidence then the view will be taken that if it is medically justified for the student to have withdrawn from the course and not proceeded with the course and not completed the course, then those payments which have been made to the student are not considered amounts which ought to be repaid to the Department of Education. They are therefore not considered to be debts, we do not seek to enter into any kind of agreement and certainly we would not refer those to the Central Arrears

Unit. The ones that I have been discussing with the Hon. Mr Reyes do not fall into that category. That is a totally different area and they do not arise as a debt in the first place.

Q153/2020

**Pupils excluded/suspended from schools –
Numbers, reasons and provision of work**

Clerk: Question number 153, the Hon. E J Reyes.

955 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Can the Minister for Education state how many pupils have been excluded
and/or suspended from schools since the answer provided to QW12/2020, indicating the
number of separate incidents involved which resulted in these pupils being suspended and/or
excluded, together with details of any education provided during the period of non-attendance
at school?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker,
15 children, involving eight incidents, have been excluded from school since the answer to
965 QW12/2020. All of these exclusions are for a short term, during which the pupils are allocated
homework so that they can keep up to date with their work – and when I say ‘short term’ we are
talking of days, sometimes two or three days. The maximum exclusion in this category is 10 days,
so we are talking of literally a very short period.

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Hon. E J Reyes: I am grateful for that, Mr Speaker.

I think I understood right – he said the maximum suspension or exclusion has been for
10 days.

Hon. G H Licudi: For these cases.

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Hon. E J Reyes: For these cases. Does the Minister have a general guideline or threshold of
what would be the length of time of exclusion for a student whereby then the education
authorities would have to kick in and provide alternative education?

980

Ten days is basically two weeks, and although it is not desirable for a pupil to miss school for
10 days, the Minister has clarified that they are given certain home books and so on, and I know
most teachers will then take it up afterwards to make sure they understand. But does he have a
general guideline issued to schools saying for anyone excluded over a particular period of time
let’s kick off some other type of educational programme?

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Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, there is not any particular amount of time which is a definite
amount of time whereby a different protocol kicks in. What happens when these incidents occur
and a head teacher decides to exclude a pupil pursuant to the behaviour policy that the school
has, the matter is then referred to the Director of Education. In fact, there is an obligation to
report the incident or the matter to the Director of Education within three days. The Director
990 will then consider, probably with the assistance of education advisers, the length of time, the
circumstances and what need there is for educational provision, and that will be arranged by the
Department of Education itself rather than the school. As I have indicated, I do not have any
specific length of time when that would kick in, but those would be decided on an individual,
case by case basis by the Director of Education.

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Q154/2020
Dyslexia –
Digital screening in schools

Clerk: Question 154, the Hon. E J Reyes.

Hon. E J Reyes: Can the Minister for Education inform this House what digital screeners are currently in place in schools to check if pupils are dyslexic and what improvements are envisaged as a consequence of Government's recently signed pledge with the Gibraltar Dyslexia Support Group?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, special educational needs co-ordinators in schools assess children who may demonstrate dyslexic tendencies. This is done using an assessment tool known as the dyslexia portfolio. If this assessment identifies any areas of concern, the children are then referred on to the Education Psychology team for further action.

The Department of Education has also acquired a licence to Lucid Rapid. This is a digital screener designed to screen children for dyslexic tendencies before they undergo the more in-depth assessment provided by the dyslexia portfolio. This screener has an assured status issued by the British Dyslexia Association. The team at the Department of Education are now planning for its implementation into our local schools, in line with the commitments made by Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar when signing the Made by Dyslexia pledge.

Additionally, all teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) will be embarking on Dyslexia Awareness Training as part of the Made by Dyslexia pledge. This training will be rolled out to schools shortly and we envisage that it will be completed before the end of this academic year.

Hon. E J Reyes: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am glad to hear that last part of the answer on the additional training provided to teachers, but the Minister also refers to LSAs undergoing that. Is it not the case sometimes that because it is more of a question of demand led many LSAs, rather than in substantive employment full time, tend to be on short-term or one-year contracts and so on, and would this necessarily not mean that they are excluded from these training programmes as LSAs, because if someone is engaged maybe on short-term programmes they end up doing x number of years at the end of the day and they are not always privy, for example, to in-service days and so on that the schools offer, because they are paid on a day basis?

I just want to make sure that the LSAs on supply contracts are not excluded from this, because not only would they benefit as LSAs but, above all, the pupils are the ones who are going to benefit from their improved qualification.

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, it is certainly the case that special needs learning support assistants (SNLSAs) are part of the complement of the Department of Education as much as teachers are part of the complement. Where there are additional needs which are identified, a supply SNLSA is brought in, in the same way as supply teachers are used whenever there are needs. In some cases, whether it is teacher or supply SNLSAs, they are given a contract for a certain period, sometimes up to a year, the whole academic year.

I do envisage that everybody who is engaged in teaching as learning support assistants this year, whether as part of the complement or on supply work, will be part of the training that will be rolled out. It is something that we would want to see for everybody involved in children's education.

1045 I am glad that the hon. Member has mentioned specifically the case of learning support
assistants, and I have mentioned specifically that they are going to be part of the rollout of this
training. They will be the ones who will be dealing with children mostly on a one-to-one basis
and sometimes they may be the first to notice that there is an issue which needs to be referred
to teachers and then possibly for further assessment, which is currently done. There are
assessments, as I have explained, which are done using the dyslexia portfolio whenever a child
1050 demonstrates any kind of dyslexic tendency. So that happens and certainly special needs
learning support assistants are very much at the forefront of all of this and are an important cog
in this whole wheel.

Q155/2020
Gibraltar College of Further Education –
Plans for site

Clerk: Question 155, the Hon. R M Clinton.

1055 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, can the Government advise what its plans are for the old
Bishop Fitzgerald School at South Bastion once the technical college has vacated the site?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

1060 **Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker,
the Government is currently considering all options in respect of the site currently occupied by
the Gibraltar College.

1065 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister. Can the Minister advise the
House whether any consideration has been given to moving St Mary's School to that site rather
than moving it to a new site?

1070 **Hon. G H Licudi:** No, Mr Speaker, the decision that was made in respect of St Mary's is
something which I believe I explained to the House previously and we have discussed in this
Parliament: St Mary's will be moving to the new site in Town Range itself.

Hon. R M Clinton: Mr Speaker, can the Minister advise whether it is the Government's
intention to retain the building as a school? Is it no longer suitable for use as a school? Can the
Minister advise that?

1075 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Government is currently considering all options in respect of that site.

1080 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, if it is currently used as an educational facility – and as far as I
am aware, unless the Minister can advise otherwise, there is no structural problem with the
building – surely it could still be used as a school and therefore St Mary's could be relocated
there, but the Minister is telling the House that they have not even considered that option.

1085 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, I have not said that we have not considered that option. I have
said that we have made a decision in respect of St Mary's. For my part, I do not consider that
particular building to be suitable for St Mary's because we are talking of smaller children than
those who have previously occupied that building and those who currently occupy that building.

What the use of the building will be and whether it will have an educational function is a
matter for the Government to consider and decide on in the future.

1090 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, can the Hon. Minister just clarify the last answer? I went to school in that building when I was eight years old. That is about the same age as some of the pupils at St Mary's, surely. So why isn't that building suitable for a school? It has been a school for many years, for decades.

1095 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, I imagine that the hon. Member went to that school as Bishop Fitzgerald, and that was an upper primary school, or what we used to call a middle school. St Mary's is a lower primary, having children as young as four or five, including the nurseries.

As I have said, the Government is still considering all options in respect of that particular site, but a decision has been taken in respect of St Mary's and that is that St Mary's will move to the new site in Town Range. Those are the plans that we are working to.

1100 **Hon. K Azopardi:** But wouldn't it have made logical financial sense to consider the possible relocation of St Mary's to this site, which is barely 150m away from the intended new site, rather than spending taxpayers' money on a new St Mary's School?

1105 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, these are matters that we considered before the last election. We set out our plans in the election, we set out where St Mary's was going to be, and we have been elected on that ticket.

1110 **Hon. R M Clinton:** Mr Speaker, if the Minister could perhaps ... I do not know whether he can answer this question or not, but in his view what is it that is primarily the problem with the old Bishop Fitzgerald site for primary school children? Is it because it is on many levels – in which case, is he then saying that the design for the new St Mary's is only going to be on one level, i.e. on a bungalow level, and not have floors to go up? Is it stairs that are the issue? What is the issue?

1115 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, it is a decision that the Government has taken. The Government considers that there are other options in relation to that site which make better financial sense.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

1120 **Clerk:** Question number –

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker –

1125 **Mr Speaker:** You have just one final question.

Hon. K Azopardi: Yes, Mr Speaker.

1130 If I just pull the threat of that, as I understood what he has just said, better options for the site that made more financial sense, meaning he is talking about the Bishop Fitzgerald site, presumably – the Gibraltar College site, what we call the Bishop Fitzgerald site, those of us who went to Bishop Fitzgerald many years ago. Is the Government presently considering plans which are non-educational for that site? And, if so, what are they and what are its contemplated ideas for that site?

1135 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the first answer that was given by the Minister, which includes what he has said. We have said that we are considering all options for that site. That means that we are considering options well beyond education, options which, as the hon. Gentleman has just been told, include better financial opportunities for the Government.

1140 But this is not just about the Government; this is about the choice that the people made at
the General Election. They were presented with different options, and one of the options they
were presented with was a new St Mary's School at Town Range, and as the hon. Gentleman
knows, this was the option that the people of Gibraltar chose. They have seen the plans and they
have made their choice. The Government is considering different options for what he calls the
1145 Bishop Fitzgerald site, which we call the current site of the College of Further Education, with
different proposals for where the College of Further Education will go.

We have been elected, by people who have seen these options and selected them, to give
effect to those options which we think are the best, financially viable options for taxpayers and
the best options for our children.

1150 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, with respect, that is not the answer to the question I asked. I
asked the question of what are those plans that they are contemplating, not are they
contemplating plans.

1155 So, I ask again: what are those plans? With all due respect to the Chief Minister – and he can
convert it, as he does often into a 'who won the election' answer – none of the contemplated
plans for the Bishop Fitzgerald site were in anybody's manifesto. So, perhaps he can share with
me the answer to the question I asked, which is: what are the plans that are being contemplated
for the Bishop Fitzgerald site?

1160 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has understood the
answer that I have already given, and indeed that the Minister has given on a number of
occasions.

It is not about converting the answer into a 'who won the election' answer. Who won the
election is obvious because they are sitting there and we are sitting here. It is about the election,
the selection that people made at the election.

1165 The line of questioning was about why St Mary's would not go to what he likes to refer to as
the old Bishop Fitzgerald site. If he now wants to take us to what is going to happen to this site,
well that takes us back to the first answer: St Mary's is not going to Bishop Fitzgerald because
the public at the General Election selected that St Mary's should go where they selected it
should go. And as to the old Bishop Fitzgerald site, as he likes to call it, we are considering a
1170 number of different options.

1175 Why am I not telling him which of the many options we are considering? For a simple reason,
Mr Speaker: because we are the ones in government considering them. When we are ready to
make an announcement about the ones that we have selected or the options we want to
pursue, we shall make an announcement. There is only one piece of advice I am going to take
from the Hon. Mr Clinton, which is not to make an announcement until the ink is dry on the
paper, which is something he said when I forget which of the FLOPS was in charge – it might
even have been Mr Clinton himself.

1180 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, of course we know who won the election, but when the
electorate make choices faced with his very long manifesto and our very long manifesto, they
take a decision in the round – and fine, they made the decision and we respect that democratic
choice, clearly. But surely the hon. Member opposite is not suggesting that when the electorate
came to decide the question of who to vote for at the election they were voting on the issue of
St Mary's.

1185 What I am putting to the hon. Member is does he not agree that faced with the possible
relocation of St Mary's to the site that we call the Bishop Fitzgerald site, to site it as they insist in
this proposed new site in Town Range is simply questionable economics? (*Interjection*)

Hon. Chief Minister: Mr Speaker, I do hesitate to go back into history to provide the answer that the hon. Gentleman requires, but I think it is important that I give him the fullest possible answer, and I am sure he will not want to have a shorter and less complete answer.

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I hark back to 2011 when the three of us who were party leaders were questioned on radio – I think he for the PDP and I for the then GSLP-Liberals. I was fighting my first election as leader, the one that I went on to win, and he was fighting his second of the three that he has gone on to lose as leader. We all said that our manifestos were commitments that we were entering into, which for us were not wish lists. The other party leader, Sir Peter Caruana, who was leading the party he now leads, said as far as he was concerned a manifesto was a wish list of aspirations that he might put before the people.

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I am surprised to see that it is he who has Caruana virus this time round, because he is now saying that we should regard our manifesto as if it were a wish list, and although people have voted for the St Mary's that they see in our manifesto we should simply disregard that and move on to different options that we might consider because *he* thinks that they make better financial sense.

1200

Well, Mr Speaker, the reasons we have already given in meetings of this House since the election reflect that what makes most sense for the taxpayer is to put St Mary's in the building in Town Range. That is a decision in the round about catchment area, about distances etc. and about cost, and when he sees one of the many options that we will decide to proceed on in respect of what he likes to call the old Bishop Fitzgerald School he will see we have made the best financial options for the taxpayer.

1205

They like to say that our financial decisions are questionable. Well, they have been questioning our financial decisions in different guises, often in the same one, for the past nine years and the results of General Elections suggest that the public disagree with them on what the new location for St Mary's should be and on who makes questionable financial decisions.

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I do recommend to him that she he should find some quick and early inoculation to the infection of the idea that manifestos are just wish lists. We do not consider them to be so, but I will of course remind him in future, if we ever have a reason to depart from a particular manifesto commitment, that he will not be able to tell me, according to his logic, that I am letting people down, because I will tell him that we appear to have long enough manifestos that people may not have voted for that and they may simply have voted in the round.

1215

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker –

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Mr Speaker: Excuse me, hon. Member, this will be the last supplementary, please. Thank you.

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, I was not suggesting that manifestos are wish lists. What I was suggesting is that people make a decision in the round. There may have been some people who said, 'I am going to vote in this election only because of the issue of St Mary's – the St Mary's issue is so important to me that the St Mary's issue is the one I am going to vote for.' I am saying that, generally speaking, that probably would not have manifested itself in the thinking of people.

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What I am saying to the hon. Member is in his longwinded way he does not really answer the question, that the issue of the decision on St Mary's has been driven by questionable economics and special interests rather than the interests of the people of Gibraltar. *(Banging on desks)*

Hon. Chief Minister: Ah, Mr Speaker, I thought that was what he wanted to say. He is, of course, entirely wrong. He is a fool, who wants to suggest that there are questionable interests simply because he thinks in that way he might be able to garner some support for what is obviously a flagging political career.

1235

1240 I am very sorry that he thinks that he has to question the integrity of people who come to
work every day to do their best for this community, in order to try and achieve some advantage.
In that respect, the virus that he is getting seems to come to him not from his former leader,
then his political opponent; it seems to come from along his benches, where there is one who
1245 thinks that the only way that he is able to garner support for himself is by casting aspersions on
others. Mr Speaker, he might be wise to look at what the electorate have done in that respect,
because one of the people who lost most loyal support in the past General Election has been
exactly that person, the person who thinks that the politics of casting aspersions is the
constructive politics that this community needs.

1250 I know him well enough to know that he was not like that when he first sat on those benches
opposite me some months ago, but I have very little hope for him if in this short period of time
he has already become that which he said he was not – in other words, a caster of aspersions,
for absolutely no reason whatsoever.

1255 Whether it is for the people who voted specifically for the St Mary's project, whether it is for
the people who voted in the round for us, or whether it is for those who chose us for any other
reason, we are going to pursue the Programme for Government that we have already persuaded
people is by far the best Programme for Government for the next four years. We are going to
pursue it honestly and we are going to pursue it diligently.

1260 If he has the ability to prove anything financially questionable has gone on, he should say so. I
know he does not, because nothing financially questionable has gone on. We are making the
right decisions for this community, for education, for the public finances of this community, and
we are doing so entirely properly every time. And every time he has suggested the opposite in
the short time that he has been the leader of the GSD, he has ended up with an ostrich egg on
his face. I am not surprised.

1265 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, just on a point of order, could I invite the Hon. the Chief
Minister to withdraw – I think I heard him correctly – the use of the adjective 'fool' made in
relation to my learned and hon. Friend? I would invite him, just for the sake of the record. I did
not stand at the time, as I wanted him to finish; I could have stood, but I did not. I invite him to
withdraw the use of that particular adjective.

1270 **Hon. Chief Minister:** Mr Speaker, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has made an allegation
which is a foolish one, and a person who makes an allegation which is a foolish one can only be
described as a fool.

1275 The hon. Gentleman will know that I am not taken to using that sort of description, but when
somebody says something which is foolish – and it is foolish to simply get up and make that sort
of allegation, especially when it is untrue – I am afraid there is only one description that applies;
for example, in the same way as somebody who decides not to enter a contest because he fears
he might lose might be best described as a chicken.

1280 **Clerk:** Question number –

Mr Speaker: If I could remind hon. Members that certain words, irrespective of the context,
should not be used – it is unparliamentary and I would ask hon. Members to respect this. Thank
you.

Q156/2020

Airport –

MoU with Gibraltar Air Terminal Ltd; Principal Auditor's report

1285 **Clerk:** Question 156, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Further to the reply to QW28/2020, can the Minister with responsibility for the Airport state when he expects that the memorandum of understanding with Gibraltar Air Terminal Ltd will be concluded and what terms it will be expected to include?

1290 Mr Speaker, just on a point of order, if I may, this is further to an answer which the hon. Gentleman passed on to me by way of written reply because he was not here at the last meeting of the House, but for the sake of the record, and certainly for those people watching or listening, I am not sure how that works. Do I give the hon. Member the opportunity to read out the reply to my question and then we go on to supplementaries, or does it stay on the record as it is?

1295 **Mr Speaker:** The written questions form part of *Hansard*.

Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, perhaps I can clarify. The question I have, that he is referring to, is W28. W28 is a written question; it is not an oral question which was then handed over in written form. I have the question here and it actually says 'written', unless the hon. Member might disagree, but the one I have got is W28, which is written, unless it is one of the ones that I was not here to answer. If it is, then it became a written question.

1305 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Yes, exactly. Just to assist the hon gentleman and to confirm the position, it was an oral question. I do not think I have ever filed a written question during my previous incarnation two Parliaments ago, or indeed in this one, so it was an oral question which was converted into a written question as a result of the hon. Member's absence at the last meeting.

1310 **Mr Speaker:** That is correct.

Hon. G H Licudi: Yes, Mr Speaker, it is just that I saw 'written' on the Order Paper and I assumed that this was presented as a written question, but in any event, as Mr Speaker has indicated, it is part of the record as much as one of the oral questions.

1315 Mr Speaker, I will answer together with Question 157/2020.

Clerk: Question 157, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1320 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Further to the reply to QW28/2020, can the Minister with responsibility for the Airport state precisely how the recommendations of the Principal Auditor, as set out in 3.13.1 and 3.13.3 to 3.13.6, have been taken into account and are being implemented?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

1325 **Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, the recommendations of the Principal Auditor, as set out in paragraphs 3.13.1 and 3.13.3 to 3.13.6, have been taken into account and implemented as follows – and this also includes 3.13.2, which is the previous question.

1330 Paragraph 3.13.1 of the Principal Auditor's report is an introductory paragraph to the section on civil aviation and it has no recommendation as such.

Paragraph 3.13.2: the Government's position in connection with the memorandum of understanding with Gibraltar Air Terminal Ltd (GATL) remains the same as stated in answer to QW28/2020. The matter is still at discussion stage.

1335 Paragraph 3.13.3: the recommendations have been implemented, as now the statements issued by the ground handler are reconciled monthly against copies of the Ground Handling Agreement charge notes. This recommendation has been given effect as from 1st April 2018.

1340 Paragraph 3.13.4 relates to the level of detail of the reconciliation statements prepared by the contractor and the fact that these did not provide the necessary detail to allow an effective monthly check against revenue received as well as arrears of revenue. The ground handler now provides a statement which is broken down into the different headings that GATL requires. Additionally, this is reconciled monthly.

1345 Paragraph 3.13.5 relates to invoicing and, more specifically, to Gibair's arrears of revenue and the fact that they did not provide GATL with an aged debtor analysis so that the Government was informed of outstanding revenue and could therefore include the amounts due in Government's arrears of revenue figures. This has been remedied, as all of Gibair's arrears of revenue are now incorporated into GATL's arrears of revenue figures and submissions.

1350 Paragraph 3.13.6 relates to the monitoring of controls over the receipt of aviation revenue in that measures should be implemented in order to ensure that revenue received was complete and accurate. The recommendation that all Ground Handling Agreement charge notes issued by the ground handler are now cross-referenced with the GATL receipts issued at the information desk has, in fact, been implemented.

1355 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, it may not be an answer that the hon. Member will have readily available to him, but in relation to those paragraphs he is absolutely right that 3.13.1 is an introductory paragraph that does not contain any recommendations.

1360 I would hasten to add that some of the recommendations seem to have been addressed if one reads the body of the Auditor's report, but I felt it was important to raise this issue publicly because I thought it was quite alarming, given that it affected a lot of the revenue streams of the Government, that it be important that the public understand that these issues have been addressed.

But the question is this: can he state when these recommendations were given effect to and were implemented?

1365 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, just to clarify, this does not affect the Government's revenue streams. This is an accounting process. It is just clarity that was required and has nothing to do with the actual money, as I understand the section on civil aviation, in terms of reconciliation and the clarity and the detail that had to be provided by the ground handler to GATL and GATL, in turn, to Government. So, it did not affect actual revenue stream but it affected reconciliation and being able to have the necessary detail to be able to carry out that reconciliation.

1370 In terms of the specific supplementary as to when they have been given effect, the information I have in relation to paragraph 3.13.3 is that this was done and was given not retrospective effect but was given effect as from April 2018. In other words, the reconciliation that was required and was recommended was done backwards until 1st April 2018.

1375 I am afraid I do not have the specific dates for each of the other paragraphs, but I am happy to obtain that information for the hon. Member if he needs it. The only specific date I have is in relation to that particular paragraph, which is 3.

1380 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, in relation to the first question in relation to this issue – this is the memorandum of understanding, which he says is still in the process of being discussed and the terms thereof – can he give an indication of when he expects that the agreements will be ready and able to be signed on the dotted line? And can he also confirm whether the terms of

that agreement will include the specific recommendation contained in 3.13.2 of the Auditor's report?

1385 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, the recommendation is that there should be a memorandum of understanding between GATL ... outlining Airport terminal fees and concessions revenue stream recipients. I am told that that is a matter that the Chief Secretary is handling directly with GATL and there are ongoing discussions as to the putting together of a memorandum of understanding dealing with this issue. I do not have specific information about the state of those
1390 discussions, except that the discussions are ongoing following from the original question, which is the answer that I gave the hon. Member originally, and the position continues to be that this is in the hands of the Chief Secretary.

Q158/2020

**Port accommodation for crew –
Provision of low-cost hotel rooms**

Clerk: Question 158, the Hon. D J Bossino.

1395 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Further to the reply to QW27/2020, can the Minister for the Port provide further details regarding the one proposal it is considering in connection with the provision of low-cost hotel rooms for crew?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

1400 **Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi):** Mr Speaker, the Government is not in a position to provide further details at this juncture. As with all discussions in relation to proposals made to Government, an announcement is made once the discussions are concluded.

1405 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can he give any indication as to whether the Government's intention is to use the current building stock in negotiations with owners who operate current hotels? Or is it the intention to build a purpose-built hotel in relation to this?

1410 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Neither, Mr Speaker.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, that is a negative. The hon. Member is very confident that the two propositions that I have put to him are not being considered. On that basis, can he provide me with some information as to what it is that he is looking at positively?

1415 **Hon. G H Licudi:** No, Mr Speaker, it is not that what he has said is not being considered. The proposal that we are dealing with does not involve the issues that the hon. Member has stated, but it is not my intention to give a running commentary as to where we are on this.

1420 The Government has received a specific proposal which the Government is not just considering but has engaged with the party giving the proposal. It is a commercial proposal and until those discussions are concluded, as we have often and repeatedly stated, no further details can be given.

Q159/2020

**University of Gibraltar –
Annual contribution from public funds**

Clerk: Question 159, the Hon. K Azopardi.

1425 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Speaker, does the Government expect to continue to make an annual contribution of £1.5 million to the Gibraltar University, or are there expectations this might go up, or be reduced?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

1430

Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, Government's contribution to the University for the financial year 2020-21 is being considered in the context of the preparation of Government's overall budget for the next financial year. The amount of the contribution will be announced at this year's Budget.

1435

Hon. K Azopardi: Mr Speaker, is the Minister in touch with the University in relation to the contribution issues and the degree of finance assistance that they require? And are there plans that the University should be more self-funding so that it would have an impact on this contribution?

1440

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, not only are there plans that the University should be more self-funding; it is in fact a statutory obligation. It is in the University of Gibraltar Act. It is a specific provision of the Act that the University should move towards that. Having said that, the University has been ongoing for several years, it is a relatively new University, it is one that has the full support of the Government and the Government will continue to provide the funding that is required for the University to succeed and prosper, as we have always intended.

1445

As regards the question of am I in touch with the University, of course I am in touch with the University on a constant basis. Just by way of information – and the hon. Member has been a member of Government, so he knows how these things work – in terms of budgets and bids, each area of responsibility for which a Minister is responsible puts in a bid, which is then collated and passed on to the Financial Secretary and Chief Minister's Office and then considered in the round in the context of the overall bids that are made to the Government from the different Departments, and then a final decision is taken. We are at that stage.

1450

1455 **Hon. K Azopardi:** I appreciate the funding and budgetary process, I appreciate that, but in the discussions ... As the Hon. Minister acknowledges, the University has an obligation to at some point get to a self-funding state, and while there may be an annual budgetary process, the University itself may not work that way in itself, in the sense that the University will, as an institution, I assume, have some kind of three- or five-year projection of where it wants to go in the context of that. Has it shared with the Minister some kind of timescale ambition of when it will get to a stage where it will be self-funding, or where the contribution might reduce? Really, that is what I am asking.

1460

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, the University clearly has a strategic plan, a five-year plan, but that is different from the preparation of a bid on a yearly basis where you look at the budget for that particular year and what the University will need for that particular year. If the University makes a bid which the Government has to consider in the context of this year's Budget and what it will provide the University this year, the fact that the University may have plans for four or five years with a view to reaching a particular level will not necessarily assist in the assessment of what the University needs this year.

1470

1475 The specific question is about the contribution that the Government makes in respect of the University, and the specific amount that is referred to is one that was contributed to last year. The amount that will be contributed to, and I can definitely say there will be a contribution from public funds to the University this year, but the specific amount is what is currently under consideration.

1480 **Hon. K Azopardi:** Perhaps the hon. Member has misunderstood my question, but I was not asking about the contribution for this forthcoming financial year. My question is: does the Government expect to continue to make an annual contribution? It is more generic really. That is why I am asking and probing in relation to the possible objectives that the University might have on a three- or five-year basis, and trying to understand if the Minister is in a place today to be able to share the expectations that there might be of the timescale of getting to a point where the University might be more self-funding, if not self-funding completely.

1485 **Hon. G H Licudi:** Mr Speaker, the hope, of course, is that the University will succeed and there will be more students, there will be more fees paid to the University and Government contribution from public funds will reduce. That is not just an aspiration, or even a hope; it is, as I have already indicated, an obligation on the University to move in that direction.

1490 I have also indicated that the University is a relatively new institution, and certainly for the next year or two, or perhaps three, I see that a public contribution will be required to the University. Government is committed to continue to fund the University because it is an institution that we are proud of and is serving a magnificent purpose.

1495 **Mr Speaker:** May I just remind hon. Members in relation to Standing Orders and its rules governing right to ask questions – I refer specifically to Standing Order 17(1)(iv):

a question shall not contain any argument, inference, imputation, epithet, or ironical expression;

I direct this to all hon. Members so that they are aware of Standing Orders.

Thank you.

Q160/2020
Equality legislation –
Teaching in schools

Clerk: Question 160, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

1500 **Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon:** What steps is the Minister for Education taking to ensure all schools teach every part of the Equality Act so that children leave with a proper understanding of the importance of equality and respecting difference?

1505 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, the Government does not understand which legislation the hon. Member is referring to. The Act which the hon. Member cites is not part of Gibraltar law.

1510 Having said that, I can inform hon. Members that the first pillar of the Department of Education's overarching vision focuses on educational equality. Every learner should have the opportunity to realise their potential through education, and no individual should get left

behind. Equal access to learning as well as ensuring the establishment and promotion of a fair and equitable environment play key parts of this pillar of the vision.

1515 We recognise that young people need to understand equality and know their rights, to understand how they should be treated and how they should treat others. Teaching these topics creates a safe place for students to explore, discuss, challenge and form their own opinions and values. The knowledge and respect of rights that students gain from this, combined with understanding, respect and tolerance for difference, can empower them to tackle prejudice, improve relationships and make the most of their lives. In our evermore diverse and challenging
1520 society, it becomes more important to instil young people with these positive and open-minded attitudes.

Teachers use inclusive language and are aware of potential bias within the learning environment. The acceptance of every person from every background is naturally important. Teachers strive to teach children to be open minded. By being aware of signs of discrimination,
1525 teachers can work to create a learning environment that ensures a classroom of equality.

In order to establish these aims, all schools have mission statements and policies that establish and promote an ethos which emphasises the importance of equality and of respecting difference.

All schools have a detailed PSHE curriculum and are currently using the programmes of study
1530 from the UK's PSHE Association to update and renew the content and approach. The PSHE Association is at the forefront of research and development for personal and social education. Equality and respect are promoted throughout the programmes of study.

PSHE themes include, at primary level: how behaviour affects others; being polite and respectful; caring for others' needs; what makes us unique; recognising hurtful behaviour;
1535 playing and working co-operatively; sharing opinions; what makes a family — looking at diversity; recognising respectful behaviour; the importance of self-respect; rights, freedoms and responsibilities; positive friendships; respecting differences and similarities; responding respectfully to a wide range of people; recognising prejudice and discrimination; compassion towards others; workplace stereotypes; recognising individuality and different qualities;
1540 relationships, civil partnerships and marriage; expressing opinions and respecting others' points of view; valuing diversity; challenging discrimination and stereotypes.

At secondary level: diversity, prejudice and bullying; race, religion and gender; self-worth; equality of opportunities in careers and life choices; discrimination in all forms; gender identity and sexual orientation; healthy relationships; teamwork; mental health and ill health stigma;
1545 communities, belonging and challenging extremism; different families and parental responsibilities; personal values and communication; conflict resolution; and relationship changes.

This learning is reinforced in other areas of the curriculum through the choice of resources, displays, assemblies and awareness-raising days.

1550 More recently, teachers have taken opportunities to update their knowledge and skills in this area. Over 40 teachers, for example, attended Mermaid Gender Awareness Training in November. Training has been attended by all teachers to raise awareness and reduce the stigma around mental health. Head teachers and teachers have also attended seminars and training: managing diversity and inclusion; on the Disability Act; disability, language and etiquette; and numerous autism training sessions.

The Ministry of Equality also works with schools to deliver issues around equality and respect. These include gender stereotypes, International Men's Day, respect and healthy relationships, and elimination of violence against women.

1560 Mr Speaker, just as an aside and as an example of what goes on in school, there was a press release issued last week, headed 'Governor's Meadow Lower Primary celebrates International Day of Women and Girls in Science'. This is a project where pupils at Governor's Meadow researched, studied and celebrated the significant work carried out by various female scientists

in the past and present and is just a recent example of the way equality and diversity are promoted in our schools. (*Banging on desks*)

1565

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, for clarity's sake, the Equality Act that I was referring to was actually the Equal Opportunities Act, I believe of 2006, but I was specifically referring to matters relating to LGBTQ+ issues, which have been addressed in PSHE but I understand they have not been fully addressed and that it will be a requirement in the UK law from 2020.

1570

Students have brought this up with me as something that needs addressing more substantively, and also with regard to bullying in that area. There are currently safe spaces provided by volunteer teachers in both Bayside and Westside who take time off from their lunch, from what I understand, to reassure on the gender variant issues in the school, but no formal training or support is being provided.

1575

So, I appreciate the intention that the Minister has expressed, but my question is: will there be formal frameworks in order for teachers to receive equality and diversity training to address these equality issues in a formal way, which is not being done at the moment within the curriculum, also to ensure a safer, equal environment? It is not happening at the moment and this is why I am asking the question if and when it will be.

1580

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, it is quite extraordinary that the hon. Member should say this is not happening. Has she not heard the answer that I have given? I have specifically referred to 40 teachers attending the Mermaid gender awareness training, also to secondary education including lessons on diversity, prejudice, gender identity and sexual orientation.

1585

The hon. Member says that what she meant in her question was LGBT+. Well, she did not say that in the question. She referred to 'the Equality Act', which I assumed meant how do we deal with equality and respect in our curriculum, and that is what I addressed in the long list.

To say that this is not happening is not correct. If the hon. Member is saying it is not happening enough, that is something that we might have to look at, but certainly the hon. Member will know that the Ministry of Equality makes great strides and does work in co-operation with the Ministry for Education. We also work with Youth as well in relation to these matters, and this is entirely promoted and taught with a view to children expressing their own views and having discussions, and promoting awareness and respect for equality. That is the ethos behind every single school in Gibraltar.

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Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, LGBTQ issues come within the remit of what I have been asking, which is about children leaving with a proper understanding of the importance of equality and respecting difference. Mermaid training is supposed to support gender dysphoria, not sexuality, and there is a big difference there.

1600

I would urge the Minister to ask many of the teachers who entertain these safe spaces if they feel like they have had the adequate training, and perhaps understand what exactly they need, because at the end of the day what we want to do is make sure that we equip them with the right skills in order to do that.

1605

Guidelines is another question and I would ask the Minister if he would be willing to set them and ensure they exist in the school, because there are no clear guidelines for supporting trans and gender diverse children also, and young people in our schools.

These are things that are missing, Mr Speaker. I am not making it up. I am bringing to the table questions in good faith in order for the Minister to be aware and perhaps set such guidelines and such training in a way that will reflect on the students, who are also calling out for it so that they can have a better understanding.

1610

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, I have no doubt that the hon. Members is raising these matters in good faith and I have not questioned that at all.

1615 It seems that she is suggesting that teachers are coming to her with those concerns. If
teachers believe that there is something missing or that more should be done in a particular
area, those concerns should be raised not with the Opposition but with head teachers and with
the Department of Education. None of this has certainly come to me, but if the hon. Member
1620 says that we should be looking at how we should further promote this area, well this is
something that is constantly looked at, in particular in discussions with the Ministry of Equality,
who are very well versed in this area.

The hon. Member will know the strides that this Government has made, throughout the eight
years that we have been in office, to promote gender awareness, to promote equality and to
promote lack of prejudice in relation to sexuality. I do not believe that any Government has
1625 done more than we have done in this area, so our record is unquestionable in this area – and
yes, we will continue to improve, we will continue to strive to make this more part of the
agenda, but it is already very much a part of the agenda in schools.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, if I can ask one more question of the Minister, and
1630 I am grateful for his answer. Will the training go as far as to train parents of children in the
schools in order for them to help children with their own issues and to teach their own children
to behave and express themselves in a way which then spills out on to the rest of the students in
order to create a better synergy and understanding among all the students? I believe that
parents should be enfranchised in this training and I am asking the Minister if it is something
1635 that he would consider.

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, generally in the Department of Education we are not in the
habit of training parents on these matters. We train the children, and certainly training is
provided to the teachers so that the teachers can impart this to the children.

1640 I understand what the hon. Member is talking about is greater awareness of these issues and
how to deal with these issues at a community level rather than just in relation to the schools.

A lot of this education, a lot of this training, starts in schools. Once children become aware of
these issues, they themselves will take those issues home and they will impart that lack of
prejudice, that lack of bias and that respect for equality wherever they are in their social
1645 environment, including at home.

It happens on environmental matters, where a great number of strides are made in relation
to environmental awareness and lack of use of plastics, and we have the children then educating
their parents and educating the wider community. That is part of what we are doing in schools.
So yes, it does spill out to the wider community.

1650 We do not give particular sessions to parents to come along to the schools, but certainly to
children to then impart on their parents and on their peers, and the wider community, these
values which are certainly at the heart of all of us, and which – I am sure I speak for all of us in
this Parliament – we want to make sure that we continue to promote.

Hon. S E Linares: Mr Speaker, if I can be of any assistance to the hon. Lady, just to say that
the Youth Service does a lot of work with the LGBTQ+ people because they also have asked me,
through the voice of young people, if they could have spaces in the youth clubs. I was just quite
surprised, in a way, to see that they were asking a Minister for space for people with gender
issues or whatever. I said to them they are free to have any space, and I looked at the Youth
1660 Service and they said it is brilliant, excellent, the fact that they can now go to the youth clubs –
they have their own space, they have their own time, they are discussing with parents and
grown-ups about these issues. There is a lot of discussion within the Youth Service about LGBTQ+.

So yes, it is happening and it is co-ordinated together with the Education Department and
together with the Ministry of Equality, so there is a lot going on. People need to understand that
1665 it is happening but it takes time and it takes society to get it into their heads about the issues

that they do encounter. I think it is important that young people are coming out and they are getting the space that they need.

Mr Speaker: Next question.

1670

Q161/2020
School leaving age –
Plans to raise

Clerk: Question 161, the Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: The compulsory school age in the UK changed from 15 to 16 in 1972. Thereafter, rules on work-based learning, part-time learning mixed with voluntary or part-time work, or full-time education apply until a child reaches the age of 18. Are there plans for the Government of Gibraltar to legislate to bring up the compulsory school age in line with the UK compulsory school age?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port.

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Minister for Education, Employment, Utilities and the Port (Hon. G H Licudi): Mr Speaker, in addition to the work on key stage alignment and the many other very positive changes the hon. Lady will agree we have already introduced, I can confirm that there are also plans to raise the school leaving age from 15 to 16.

Hon. Ms M D Hassan Nahon: Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he give us an indication of by when, more or less, they think it might be implemented?

1690

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, I would expect by the start of the next academic year.

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Hon. E J Reyes: May I, Mr Speaker? The hon. Lady, in her question, adds that in the UK the school leaving age has been set at 16 from 1972 onwards, but she adds in her sentence, 'Thereafter, rules on work-based learning ...' and so on. Does the Minister have in mind perhaps considering an introduction of that specification, or is Gibraltar going to be simply, as hereto, that a child reaches the age where you are legally in school and with parental consent he simply walks out of the school building and is left to his own devices thereafter?

1700

Hon. G H Licudi: Mr Speaker, it is obviously our intention that our children should be as well-equipped as possible when they leave the school environment, at whatever age that may be, whether it is 15, 16 or 18.

1705

The hon. Member will know the effort ... and I have mentioned briefly in my answer the various changes that we have made this year and the ongoing changes, the positive changes that we have introduced to education in the last few years. One of the areas that we have introduced, which my colleague introduced last year when he was Minister for Education, was the vocational pathway in school. That is not exactly the same as what happens in the UK, but it is a way of supporting children who reach a school age where they might be thinking of their options for the future and might be not as academically inclined as others may be.

1710

This is a pathway which starts in conjunction with a normal academic route in the schools and can then lead, once they finish that – which they would finish at the age of 16, at the same time that they would finish their GCSE options if they have chosen this vocational pathway, which would include NVQ levels 1 and 2 – they can then proceed, if necessary, to carry on with NVQ level 3 in the same vocational pathway that they have chosen.

1715 We have already announced, and it is in fact in our manifesto, our plans for expansion of the areas that we will introduce as part of these vocational pathways, and we now have the facilities in the schools in order to be able to do this, particularly with the new facilities at the comprehensive. So, this year, additional pathways will be rolled out and we are in discussions with unions and with stakeholders, with the Chamber of Commerce, and we are going to have a meeting of all relevant stakeholders to see how everyone – both from the point of view of the Education Department, the unions, who look at worker issues, and the business organisations – can all support in a way which keeps children active and following a pathway which will lead to a productive life.

1720
1725 So we are moving in that direction and we are having discussions with all the relevant people, but we have already implemented some of this in the schools and there is more to come this year.

BUSINESS, TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

Q162/2020

Parking tickets – Numbers issued and paid

Clerk: Question 162, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1730 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, I suspect that this question is going to be slightly redundant, given that GBC beat me to it so far as this question is concerned, or thereabouts, but I will ask it in any event because it leads on to other interesting questions.

How many parking tickets have been issued over the last 12 months and how many have been paid?

1735 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, over the last 12 months there have been 18,882 fixed penalty notices issued and 11,924 paid.

Hon. E J Phillips: Given the answer to the question, does the Minister have any information on his note that has been prepared in relation to the answer to this question, as to whether they are in relation to locally registered vehicles or those across the way in Spain?

Hon. V Daryanani: These are figures on the total amount of parking tickets. I do not have information as to whether they are local or Spanish, but I am sure we can find out if you wish to ask me next time, or I can write to you.

Q163-64/2020

Derelict vehicles – Number of notices issued; vehicles issued with multiple notices

1740 **Clerk:** Question 163, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how many tickets have been issued on the basis that the vehicle is derelict?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

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Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 164.

Clerk: Question 164, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1750

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state of those tickets issued on the basis that the vehicle is derelict how many have been issued with derelict issued parking tickets previously?

1755

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, in both these questions the hon. Member has failed to provide a time frame for his request. I am happy to try and furnish him with the figures at the next meeting, if he is more specific. I would also ask that he confirm the tickets he is referring to, although we have assumed he meant parking tickets for the purposes of the answer provided.

1760

Hon. E J Phillips: I am not assuming anything. I am assuming that a ticket that has been issued for a derelict vehicle ... There is only one type of ticket that can actually be reasonably issued by the relevant authority for the purposes of parking.

1765

The basis of my question was in relation to a number of vehicles that have been brought to my attention whereby multiple tickets have been issued against the vehicle in order for the occupant himself to retain a spot within the parking bay. These individuals, it is known, extend the time of their MoT certificates, or at least the MoT investigations that need to be conducted on these types of vehicles, and just constantly replace them, in other words maintaining a spot within the parking bay, which I am sure the Hon. Minister is familiar with, a practice we should all discourage actively in this House.

1770

That was the nature of the type of question I was getting at. I am quite happy to ask a further question about that and give the hon. Gentleman a timeframe, but surely the Minister would have some useful information that would identify those offenders who have had derelict notices issued on a multiple basis or on a singular basis.

1775

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, I must say that I am not really aware of so many cases of this happening. I am not really aware of exactly how often this happens, but I have heard of certain cases. I have also seen this on social media, but I will tell you one thing: when I go back, tomorrow, to the office I am going to find out if anybody has complained about this or brought this forward to the Ministry.

1780

Hon. E J Phillips: It arises directly, of course, by the strategic plan implemented by the Government insofar as freeing up parking spaces so people can actually park their cars. If there are people in our community who do not respect that and use mechanisms within the law to curve around it so that they can continue to use these parking spaces constantly and not allow other members of our community to enjoy these parking spaces, that should be something that we should all condemn, so that people can use parking spaces freely without knowing that they are being obstructed consistently.

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Hon. V Daryanani: Yes, Mr Speaker, I will be launching a project very soon that will help with the moving of these derelict vehicles, so that, as you rightly say, these are for parking for our people and not for people who just want to take advantage of the situation.

Q165/2020
Derelict vehicles –
Number removed in last 12 months

Clerk: Question 165, the Hon. E J Phillips.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how many derelict vehicles have been removed in the last 12 months?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

1800

Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, 149 vehicles have been removed from the road in the last 12 months.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, this is clearly evidence of a problem that we have in our community in relation to derelict vehicles and the use and misuse of parking spaces within our community.

1805

Insofar as the derelict vehicles are concerned, what is the process that follows? I appreciate it is not on the Order Paper, but does the Minister know what we actually do and what the relevant authorities do with these derelict vehicles once they have removed them from those spaces?

1810

Hon. V. Daryanani: Mr Speaker, that is one thing I have not found out yet, but I will.

Q166/2020
Emissions tests –
Number of vehicles tested in last 12 months

Clerk: Question 166, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1815

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government state how many vehicles have been subjected to emissions tests in the last 12 months?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

1820

Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, 11,545 vehicles were subjected to emissions tests in the last 12 months as part of the roadworthiness tests.

Q167/2020
Creation of cycle lanes/corridors –
Government position

Clerk: Question 167, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1825

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm its position on the creation of segregated cycle lanes/cycle corridors?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

1830 **Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, as per the Government's manifesto commitments, we are continuing our work to create segregated cycling lanes where physically possible. Segregated cycling lanes need to be truly meaningful and safe, planned carefully so as to connect areas of importance to cyclists, which would create cycling corridors. Gibraltar currently lacks ample space to hurriedly and impulsively implement these.

1835 Implementing short distances of lanes may be of little use and may often be more dangerous than not having these lanes at all. The Government is therefore working to develop a credible and comprehensive plan that will secure the safety of cyclists, reduce pollution and improve quality of life as a key plank of our Green Gibraltar strategy and our desire to create a truly child-friendly city in Gibraltar.

1840 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I am grateful to the Minister for his response and I agree, in fact, that short-distance lanes are clearly dangerous to members of the community. I would also agree that you have to create something that is truly meaningful insofar as your transport policy is concerned.

1845 Having said all of that, and the conclusions that he has drawn in respect of that response, would he now agree with me that the demarcation in areas where there have been short-distance lanes for cycles has been unsuccessful in our community; and given the fact that, as he alludes, they may well be dangerous to our community, that they would revoke that policy in relation to the current cycle lanes that have been introduced in Gibraltar?

1850 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, I do not think that the cycle lanes have been unsuccessful. If I am not mistaken, there is only one cycle lane, so it is not that there are many cycle lanes that have been unsuccessful. There has only been – Sorry? (*Interjection Hon. P J Balban*) It is not demarcated, so it is not a ... I am told by my hon. Friend and colleague, my predecessor as Minister for Transport, that ... I thought there was only one demarcated cycle lane, which is the one to Main Street, but he tells me there is another one on the runway.

1855 I think the one on the runway is frequently used and is extremely successful. The one on Main Street is different because it is only in certain hours and I think, because it is on a pedestrianised street, perhaps it is something that has not been successful. It was a pilot project and pilot projects are there for that, at the end of the day, to see how successful ... I think it is a start.

1860 Insofar as what is coming, I am looking at three new areas for cycle lanes, but these are three long areas and, as I said, they have to be carefully devised. Gibraltar is small. We are not a major city where we have huge thoroughfares, so we need to be very careful in how we plan this, but the Government is committed to cycle lanes, it is in our manifesto and we will definitely deliver on this because I am keen on doing so. Like I said, I am looking at three specific areas and you will hear about them in the near future.

Hon. E J Phillips: I am grateful for that response.

1870 I am not trying to make a political point out of it. What I am suggesting, given the natural conclusions that the Hon. Minister has made in relation to these points, that the pilot example that he has given insofar as Main Street is concerned ... Although we may differ in opinions as to the success of that pilot project, it is clear by a number of observations that we have received in our community – not just via social media, of course, but it is clearly, in my respectful view, dangerous, and therefore will the Government commit to withdrawing that pilot project to enable it to really focus, as he has now announced, on three specific areas which will improve the ability of our community and those visiting our community to cycle in Gibraltar in an appropriate way?

I commend him insofar as the initiative that he will bring to introduce three cycle lanes, but insofar as that pilot project, as far as I know it is still in operation. If it is still in operation, I would

1880 ask him whether the Government will abandon it at this stage and focus on better transport policies in relation to cycling.

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, the Government will commit itself to looking into that, but we have no specific commitment to abandoning it at this moment in time.

1885

Minister for Health and Care (Hon. P J Balban): Mr Speaker, may I? Just as a matter of information, Main Street is not a cycle lane. It started off being a cycle lane, but after that it became a shared use space. The problem with having a bicycle lane per se is that it gives a cyclist the idea of 'This is my space, and anyone who crosses my space I will tell them off.'

1890

The fact is that that is a pedestrianised area and the pedestrian always comes first, so the idea was ... This is why the lane markings are disappearing. That is because it has become a shared space only during certain hours of the day, which means after seven o'clock at night and before 9.30 in the morning, at which times delivery vehicles are passing through there anyway and obviously while deliveries are happening cyclists can go in a certain direction and keep up with the flow of traffic. But it is only on predetermined times. If people are cycling the wrong way at other times of the day, whether you have an allowance for cyclists or not, that is what happens regardless – it happened before and it will always happen unless policing is in place.

1895

Main Street is not a cycle lane; it is an area that cyclists can use, always respecting that pedestrians come first, in the given direction and only during certain hours of the day.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Given what the current Minister for Transport has said in relation to short distances – and Main Street is a relatively short distance, in my view – as this was a pilot project and as I am sure both Ministers during their respective times have received information from the general public as to the efficacy of this particular lane, given that the markings are poorly worn away over time as well and given Main Street is a thoroughfare, effectively, for the public to move up and down, would it not make sense for that now to be scrapped at this stage insofar as public health and safety is concerned, with a view to taking a more holistic approach as to how we use bicycles in our community? I would encourage him to assist me in the answer to this question because I think it is an important one.

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1910

I agree with him in terms of cycling generally in Gibraltar; I think we need to improve the quality of it. But what I would say is that that pilot study itself has not been a success and we should now look at ways ... I am not criticising him, because it is fine, he tried it and it did not work, and that is great, but insofar as the public health and safety of our community we should now look at ways of abandoning that and moving to a more consistent and sustainable cycling policy.

1915

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, first of all, I do not agree that it has not been a success. That is your view and you are entitled to it, but I do not think it has been tested. I think people are still using that cycle lane – so, if people are using it, it means it is a success. Whether it is as successful as we would have wanted it to be, we do not know yet. Maybe when we actually have other cycle lanes we might take stock of the situation and decide whether we want to keep it or not, but at this moment in time we have no plans of abandoning it.

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Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, is it therefore the Government's view, taking all of that into consideration, that the current arrangement so far as cycling in Main Street is safe for the public?

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Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, it is as safe as everything else is safe. It is not unsafe. It is as safe as it is to drive or anything else. We are not going to start getting technical here.

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1935 **Hon. P J Balban:** Mr Speaker, if I may, just to correct the hon. Gentleman, he said 'short bicycle lanes'. If Main Street had been a cycle lane per se, that is not a short lane. When we look at short lanes, what is meant is very short stretches where there is a cycle lane placed, whereby every time a cyclist needs to come back on to the main road he has to look back for oncoming vehicles. Those cycling lanes are perceived as dangerous. What you want is extended lanes, and if you look at Main Street it extends all the way up Main Street and down Irish Town. For the size of Gibraltar, there is probably close to a kilometre of cycle lane, which far exceeds what we have at the Airport. If you look at the Airport, what happens is once you get to the end of the Airport you have to come back on to the main road. So that is what you have to judge, whether small stretches are ... But that is something that the new Minister would have to look at and he will need to see for himself after researching and then come to his own conclusions in that respect.

1940 **Hon. E J Reyes:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.
I wanted to thank the former Minister for Transport for his clarification that in the shared space – I think he was referring to Main Street and Irish Town – the priority should lie with the pedestrians. Can I encourage the Government to ask its press office to remind cyclists and pedestrians alike that the priority does lie with pedestrians?

1950 If the Government wants to gather evidence on the success or not, I and many members of my family can personally testify that we have been victims to ill use by cyclists of both Main Street and Irish Town during unauthorised hours, and if it is during authorised hours they certainly think that they are the king of the road and the pedestrians do not have priority. I say that for the Government's benefit.

Q168-69/2020

E-scooters –

Results of review; complaints

Clerk: Question 168, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1955 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government confirm that they have completed their review of the use of e-scooters and state the conclusions reached?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

1960 **Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 169.

Clerk: Question 169, the Hon. E J Phillips.

1965 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state how many complaints have been received by the relevant authorities insofar as the use of e-scooters is concerned?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

1970 **Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, in answer to Question 168, Government have now reviewed the feedback received throughout the consultation exercise, and based on our assessment of that feedback is aiming to publish legal instruments shortly to control and regulate personal light electric transporters (PLEVs).

1975 In answer to Question 169, with respect to complaints, the Ministry have not, to my knowledge, received any direct complaints with particular regard to the use of e-scooters.

People sometimes are more forthcoming on social media than they are in the process of filing direct complaints.

1980 **Hon. E J Phillips:** To clarify, he said that the Government had not received complaints. I did ask for the relevant authorities – so that would have been the enforcement, Police, Customs, Borders, any relevant authority that would receive them, rather than particularly the Government – but I assume the answer to the question is zero, no official complaints have been received.

1985 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Yes, Mr Speaker, my Ministry has not received any sort of specific complaints that have then been brought to my attention.

1990 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Just one further question: when does the Government propose to promote regulations in relation to the regulation of e-scooters?

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, it is something that is there. It will come to me in the next couple of weeks and hopefully I will be able to bring the Bill to Parliament by June at the very latest. (*Interjection by Hon. E J Phillips*) I am giving you a commitment.

1995 **Hon. E J Phillips:** With respect, Mr Speaker – you are publishing regulations rather than bringing primary legislation to this House?

2000 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Like I say, it has been prepared and a final draft will be sent to me in the next week or so, so I will be able to give you more information then.

Hon. E J Phillips: No, Mr Speaker, what I was getting at was will the Government be legislating by way of regulation, or will the Minister be bringing a Bill to the House for the regulation of e-scooters?

2005 **Hon. V Daryanani:** I will be bringing a Bill to the House.

Q170-71/2020

Number of vehicles registered in Gibraltar – Four-wheel vehicles and motorcycles; hybrid or electric vehicles

Clerk: Question 170, the Hon. E J Phillips.

2010 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Can the Government state how many four-wheeled vehicles and motorcycles were registered in Gibraltar as of Friday, 7th February 2020?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

2015 **Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 171.

Clerk: Question 171, the Hon. E J Phillips.

2020 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, can the Government state, of all the registered vehicles how many are hybrid or electricity run?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, in answer to Question 170, the total number of registered vehicles in Gibraltar as at Friday, 7th February 2020 for four-wheel active vehicles and motorcycles is 43,929.

Of these vehicles, in answer to Question 171, the total number of registered hybrid or electric is 497.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, does the Hon. Minister have a breakdown between the number of four-wheel vehicles and motorcycles? It is just that the Minister has given me the total amount, but does he have the breakdown on his script?

Hon. V Daryanani: No, Mr Speaker, the hon. Member asked for how many four-wheel vehicles and motorcycles are registered; he did not ask for a breakdown.

Clerk: Question 172, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Just one supplementary question. Given the commitment of the Government in the last Parliament to be ambitious – and I think it is the correct one – to promote the use of hybrid- and electric-run vehicles, is the Government disappointed by the numbers of registered vehicles that are hybrid- and electricity-run at the moment? It would appear that we may well be long off that target, which is an ambitious target but one which I agree with.

What is the Government going to be doing about improving communication with the general public as to the purchasing of these types of vehicles going forward? We do not really have that much time left. I think it is 2035 the Hon. Chief Minister said in relation to hybrid, and 2040, if I am not mistaken, in relation to full-electric vehicles. The Minister will obviously be aware that the United Kingdom has also brought back their scheduling of this to match ours – I believe that is correct.

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, the Government is committed to promoting the use of hybrid or electric vehicles.

I think that at the moment we are at an early stage of the development of this product and as time goes by I think people will realise, when there are new products on the market, that going electric is the right way. It is a question of time, and perhaps a little bit of patience, before people start realising that driving an electric vehicle is much better than driving a petrol or a diesel one. So I think it is early days, and as time goes by and the product is developed I think we will see more electric vehicles on the road.

The Government will keep on promoting that and I am looking at perhaps some kind of promotion drive in getting people acquainted to the idea.

Q172/2020

Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan – Implementation of recommendations

Clerk: Question 172, the Hon. E J Phillips.

Hon. E J Phillips: Mr Speaker, since the publication of the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan, what has the Government done to introduce the recommendations made therein?

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Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, our Government has been diligent in the implementation of the recommendations of the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan (STTPP).
2070

As far back as 2017 we were pleased to announce one of the first initiatives following the launch of the Sustainable Traffic, Transport and Parking Plan: the highly anticipated speed cameras. The speed cameras followed previous speed management measures by way of introduction of solar-powered electronic speed display signs.

2075 In April 2017 the final night bus route N8 was launched, completing the Gibraltar Bus Tracker web app platform. This was, as the hon. Member will appreciate, the first ever service offering bus users real-time bus information.

Then, in May, a traffic light controlled crossing by Ocean Views was implemented along with a number of speed calming measures in the area.

2080 Also in May, and following consultation with the RGP, legislative changes were introduced to the Traffic Act 2005 to include new traffic offences.

The Redibike Bicycle Hire Sharing Scheme was also introduced in May as a means of offering alternative sustainable modes of transport to commuters.

2085 The same month, the first pilot residential parking zone, zone 1, was launched, a first of its kind, following the extensive and thorough research that took into account the valuable stakeholder feedback received during the preparation of the STTPP – unlike the North District residential parking zones that were launched by the hon. Member's Government, which did not properly take into account the proper needs of residents of these areas.

2090 To finish the month of May 2017, the completion of improvements to Governor's Street was announced as part of the STTPP's vision statement to promote sustainable modes of travel, such as walking, by enhancing pedestrian routes, which to some extent minimise adverse effects on our environment.

Another recommendation was the implementation of pay and display areas to provide short-term parking and vehicular turnaround at locations known to be heavily frequented.

2095 The new hours for commercial vehicle access into Main Street and neighbouring pedestrianised areas was another measure introduced under the umbrella of the STTPP. This initiative was done in conjunction with the introduction of commercial loading and unloading hubs to enable 24/7 access.

2100 To enhance the public bus route service and in keeping with the recommendations of the STTPP, request bus stops were also introduced. This initiative moved away from the previous practice whereby buses stopped at all bus stops irrespective of whether there were passengers wishing to alight, thus often resulting in unnecessary delays.

2105 Again, and as part of the continued workings and implementation of recommendations in the plan, a speed limit review of Europa Road was announced with changes to speed limits carried out.

Some more traffic and pedestrian improvements were announced in September 2017 by way of two new zebra crossings at different locations, Europa Road and Rosia Road – more promotion of sustainable modes of travel such as walking, by enhancing and providing safer passage for pedestrians.

2110 Pedestrian signage improvements were further implemented during November 2017 with signage improvements along the area of Waterport Road, improvements to continue to promote and encourage walking.

As part of the continued monitoring phases of the STTPP, short-stay parking bays were implemented in zone 1 at the start of 2018.

2115 In continuing with the rollout of residential parking schemes, January 2018 saw another STTPP scheme with the implementation of zone 2, a residential parking zone that, as the hon.

Member will appreciate, entailed thorough consideration and challenges due to the limited on-street parking spaces available by contrast to the number of unique addresses in the area.

2120 The first official electric vehicle charging points were introduced at Midtown car park in keeping with the STTPP, an HM Government of Gibraltar initiative that was also consistent with the Department of the Environment's Thinking Green environmental awareness campaign, an example of Ministries working in unison towards a common goal.

2125 At the start of the summer season, Residential Parking Scheme Zone 3 was rolled out, yet another step in the parking zoning of residential districts in Gibraltar, providing residents of that area with an improved chance of parking whilst still supporting the needs of visitors and commercial activity in the area. In parallel with the launching of this zone, the Government was also listening to feedback from stakeholders and announced changes to zones 1 and 2 to continue to improve the system and increase the effectiveness and success of the scheme.

2130 Following the successful launch of the first phase of the speed cameras, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar was pleased to announce the second phase of this project in June of 2018. This included the introduction of two further fixed speed camera sites along Queensway and Waterport Wharf Road.

2135 With the new school year in 2018 came the eagerly anticipated new school bus service. This bus departed from the south to the schools, exclusively for the use of school children in the hope that it would result in fewer car trips, leading to less congestion and contributing to reducing the carbon emissions.

2140 Two thousand and eighteen came to an end with the revision of the Gibraltar Blue Badge Scheme to include a number of initiatives to enhance the system for users. This came as a result of the perceived abuse and inconsiderate use of the bays. The pilot scheme would also see the introduction of new restricted disabled parking bays throughout Gibraltar to allow improved parking opportunities for users.

2145 We started 2019 with a series of improvements to pedestrian safety and options in the area of Market Place, Corral Road and Glacis Road. These included a new crossing under Smith Dorrien Bridge, more motorcycle parking and the relocation of a loading bay to a more suitable and safer location.

2150 Later in the month, attention turned to bus stop enhancements, when the launch of new bus stop flagpole signage began in phases. These signs are designed to be more user friendly and add to a new branding that was taking shape at the Gibraltar Bus Company, following on from the new logo representing public transport in Gibraltar. Other improvements also included a new bus network map which is easier to read for visitors and locals alike.

2155 Further recommendations focused on major resurfacing works of Queensway and the promotion of cycling in Gibraltar, an excellent and healthy activity as a mode of transport, and enhancements such as more bicycle racks in key areas like Europort, Harbour Views, Little Bay, Cornwall's Parade and the new comprehensive schools at Waterport.

2160 Indeed, even in the last two months that have passed this year we have taken additional action in the introduction of a new school bus service, route S2, which was announced in Press Release 1/2020. This service has been widely welcomed and well received, like much of the rest of the implementation of the groundbreaking STTPP.

2165 Mr Speaker, I should add that a lot of what I have said, if not all of it, is publicly available information – information one would expect the hon. Member to be acquainted with in his capacity as shadow Minister.

2165 **Hon. E J Phillips:** Mr Speaker, as much as I would like to rise to the bait in relation to the North District parking schemes and effectively the insult that he laid at our feet in the last sentence of his very full answer to the question, of course what we will be doing now is analysing everything he has said and coming back with further questions in relation to the Government's transport policy.

2170 But what I would ask him to confirm is that his policy is a living document, i.e. it can change given representations made, and he has alluded to that in relation to the South District parking schemes. He has also conceded, I think, in some small measure that the cycle lane issue that we have had this afternoon ... I do not want to bring that up again, but this is a living document, the STTPP, in that he will receive constructive comment from the Opposition and indeed members of the public as to how it works in practice. I would ask him to clarify that it is such a document rather than a fixed piece of work that the Government commissioned.

2175

Hon. V Daryanani: I am sorry, Mr Speaker, I do not get the hon. Member's question.

2180 **Hon. E J Phillips:** I thought it was plainly clear, but anyway I will repeat it for the benefit of the Minister himself. I am asking him whether he considers this to be a living document, or rather a fixed document insofar as the Government's policy in relation to transport is concerned. I hope that is easier for him to understand.

2185 **Hon. V Daryanani:** It is a living document; we are working with it all the time. As you can see, we have done a lot over the last three years and we will continue improving on a lot of the stuff that is in that document.

Q173/2020
Travel trade roadshows –
Cost and participant details

Clerk: Question 173, the Hon. D J Bossino.

2190 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can the Minister for Tourism provide details of the travel roadshows announced by his Department recently to London, Manchester and Bristol, to include the cost to the Government and entities which participated?

Clerk: Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

2195 **Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, as outlined in Press Release 69/2020, the Gibraltar Tourist Board (GTB) hosted three travel trade roadshows in the UK on 4th, 5th and 6th February in the London area, Manchester and Bristol.

2200 These events are aimed at the travel trade in the UK. Agents were invited to engage with representatives of the tourism industry from Gibraltar and UK operators featuring the Rock, along with British Airways and easyJet.

2200 There was a series of business-to-business opportunities and destination presentations, where UK travel agents were updated on all that Gibraltar has to offer our visitors. The Chief Executive of the GTB delivered destination presentations at all three venues.

2205 Co-exhibiting with the GTB were Kirker Holidays, Blands Travel, M H Bland, Sunborn Gibraltar, Dive Charters, British Airways, easyJet, Fred Holidays and Enable Holidays. There was no cost for these exhibitors except for their own travel and accommodation costs to attend these events.

I, as Minister for Tourism, attended the first of the roadshows in the London area.

A hundred and eight travel agents in total attend the roadshows. These are people who directly sell holidays to consumers in their outlets on a daily basis.

2210 The information requested by the hon. gentleman in respect of costs is provided in the schedule I now hand over. There should be no doubt, looking at the costs involved, that the value for money being achieved by these events is excellent and shows that the Government is listening to the industry and delivering.

2215 If I were to divide the total cost of the events per agent, bearing in mind that the costs also cover the expenses of the GTB, hospitality and exhibition charges for the co-exhibitors, the Government has spent just over £190 per agent in these events. Imagine if just a fraction of these sold one holiday to Gibraltar the next day, how this would multiply into the economy and the value we have delivered.

Answer to Question 173

FLIGHTS	£1,464.00
SUBSISTENCE	£196.00
EVENT COSTS	£16,740.00
MISC EXPENSES	£59.00
HOTEL ACCOMMODATION	£1,913.00
TRAVEL EXPENSES	£476.00

2220 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Given that the Minister is so bold and excited about this project, can he advise whether he intends to do more of these? And does he have a structure and a plan in place going forward in the medium to long term?

Hon. V Daryanani: I am bold and excited about every project that I undertake. (*Banging on desk*) (**A Member:** Hear, hear.)

2225 Mr Speaker, of course I have a plan on how we are going to carry out ...

First of all, I think it is excellent value for money. If you see the total amount that was spent, which is just under £21,000 for three roadshows, it is approximately £7,000 each.

2230 I was present at the London show, and the amount of interest that Gibraltar has is quite amazing. The agents who are there are keen supporters of Gibraltar and very keen supporters of Gibraltar’s tourism industry, so I think the idea of having these roadshows is, in my view, an excellent one and one that the Government will continue to pursue.

2235 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, he does not need to be concerned about my question about costs. In fact, on the face of it, it does not look like that much, to be honest, given that we are talking about three roadshows, in effect, so I am not targeting him in relation to that point and he can rest assured and be calm about that. It is really that he has expressed a desire to continue with these roadshows, but does he have, at this stage, a proper ... let’s not call it ‘proper’, a *specific* structure in place? In other words, what I am getting at is: is he planning to go to other cities maybe next year or at the end of this year? And which cities? If he does not have that
2240 information, I would be grateful if he could provide us with that information. Or is it the same cities because he has seen that they have been a success? It is that type of structure that I am quizzing him about.

2245 **Hon. V Daryanani:** The Government will be holding a roadshow in Edinburgh on 3rd March. Of course, that is in conjunction with the launch of the new air route. That is what we have planned at the moment.

2250 The way the Tourist Board works is that they tend to have annual roadshows in London, Bristol and Manchester, obviously because of the direct links that we have with these three cities, and the reason why we are having this first ever roadshow in Edinburgh is because easyJet is launching the new route.

Hon. D J Bossino: Just one final question. Presumably this has been taken from his press release which he referred to in his initial reply, but it is reported in the *Gibraltar Chronicle* as well and I am quoting from that particular news outlet. He is quoted, I think, as saying:

Our new UK-wide campaign entitled 'Time to be Enlightened' developed by our media buyers and their design team ...

2255 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Can he provide details of who these media buyers and design team are?

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, a lot of this work is done through our London office, so I will have to find out who the exact company that was involved in this is.

2260 **Hon. D J Bossino:** And, Mr Speaker, is the cost in relation to that specific item set out here? Presumably the answer is no, but I just would like the hon. Member to confirm that position.

Hon. V Daryanani: That is correct – it is not included in that, Mr Speaker.

Q174-75/2020

Business Improvement District Scheme – Government participation and financial contribution

Clerk: Question 174, the Hon. D J Bossino.

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Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Small Businesses provide further details regarding the Government's participation in the Business Improvement District Scheme (BID) task force, to include the agencies involved?

2270 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani): Mr Speaker, I will answer this question together with Question 175.

2275 **Clerk:** Question 175, the Hon. D J Bossino.

Hon. D J Bossino: Can the Minister for Small Businesses state what the expected financial contribution of the Government to the BID scheme will be?

2280 **Clerk:** Answer, the Hon. the Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport.

2285 **Minister for Business, Tourism and Transport (Hon. V Daryanani):** Mr Speaker, in answer to Question 174, as the hon. Member may be aware, a press release was published on 30th January 2020 setting out that work continues on the Main Street Business Improvement District. At present, my Ministry continues in discussions with the GFSB and the Mosaic Partnership, and is working on preparing the necessary legislative framework.

2290 In answer to Question 175, as the hon. Member will appreciate, the Government is committed to supporting the bid proposal on a pound-for-pound basis, a commitment, as I am sure he will be aware. The expected final contribution will be ascertained once the size of the district is determined and the levies payable have been calculated. Once again Mr Speaker, the Mosaic Partnership is currently actively working with the task group on the BID proposal.

Hon. D J Bossino: Mr Speaker, some specific questions arise from that. I will be as brief as I possibly can.

2295 The press release – again, I do not have it in front of me, but I do have it as a *Chronicle* press report, which presumably has gleaned information from the press release that the hon. Gentleman or his Department issued. It says 18 local businesses and Government agencies will form part of the BID task group. Can he be more specific as to which Government agencies these are?

2300 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, this task group is not formed by the Government, or is not formed by me. This is a task group that is formed by the company carrying out this project, the Mosaic Partnership, and the GFSB. They have asked the Government for assistance in matters to do with legislation, and my Ministry are present in trying to assist them in trying to sort themselves out.

2305 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, maybe if I can assist the hon. Gentleman – is he then saying the participation from the Government side is limited to his Department? Is that correct?

2310 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Well, at the moment, what the BID needs to do, first of all, is the legislation. I actually had a meeting with them today and one of the first things that I wanted to know from them was how we could move with the legislation, because until the legislation is in place there is not much that can be done. They also need to vote this in, because if the traders do not want it, that is where the matter ends. So it is a bit of a catch-22 situation.

2315 We, as the Government, were happy to proceed with putting the legislation in place in the way that they wanted to, but their own members might vote this down; so, until they decide what they want to do, we cannot really proceed. What I am doing is trying to assist them in moving this forward because I am keen on seeing improvements on Main Street. That is my participation and the participation of the Government.

2320 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, it may be a minor point, but I just want to understand, on the Government side, what their level of participation is. The press report – I am assuming gleaned from, as I said earlier, the Government's own press release, but I do not have it in front of me – talks about involvement from Government agencies in the pool. What I am asking the hon. Member is to elucidate upon that.

2325 I see that the Hon. the Minister for the Environment wants to butt in and participate in answering the questions, so maybe he can elucidate and provide that answer in a clear and succinct way.

Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change (Hon. Prof. J E Cortes): Mr Speaker, I have no intention of butting in, merely to assist, in the sense that one of the activities of the BID – if, as my hon. Friend says, it is voted in and it is successful – will be the holding of events in the BID, and I am responsible for cultural events and therefore we are involved in supporting in that way. It is not butting in at all; it is assisting in providing information.

2330 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, I meant butting in in the reply, not necessarily in the process.

2335 The hon. Member talks about the legislation – can he be a bit more specific in relation to that? What is it that is specifically being considered? He referred to a meeting which I think he said he has had today with the various stakeholders and I would be interested to learn what it is that the Government, presumably by the Mosaic Group, is being asked to do on that account.

2340 **Hon. V Daryanani:** Mr Speaker, the main part of the legislation is how the moneys will be collected, because at the end of the day we are going to be paying half of that and the rest of the traders will be paying their share, so we have to ascertain how those moneys will be collected. That is one of the most important things that we have to look at. The idea at this stage is for it to be collected as part of the rates, so that is one of the things that is being considered.

2345 Like I say, we are open to suggestions, as in from the Mosaic Partnership and the GFSB. This is not our idea or plan or anything; it is something that they have wanted to do. They have come to us and Government is willing to support it, in the same way that Government is supportive of anything else that might be brought to us.

2350 **Hon. D J Bossino:** Mr Speaker, I sense that the hon. Member is slightly tetchy and defensive about this. I am just trying to elicit some information – No, Mr Speaker, I have not finished. Let me ask the supplementary.

2355 He talks about the main point which is being considered and he talks about the suggestions which are being put to him, quite rightly, by the Mosaic Group. If he does not have the information in front of him, that is fine and I can ask him next month or he can provide it to me on another occasion. All I am asking him is whether he can advise the House, by way of reply to my question, what areas of legislation they are looking at. He talks about the main point: dealing with the collection of moneys. Are they looking, if I can assist him, to some reform of the Fair Trading Act, for example, or the licensing legislation and matters like that?

2360 It is a very simple question and he does not need to be defensive about the answers. I just want an answer.

Hon. V Daryanani: Mr Speaker, I think the Member opposite does not know what he is talking about. The only thing he knows about Main Street is when he walks down it. That is all I can think of, because he has not got a clue about Main Street.

2365 And I am not being tetchy. *(Laughter and interjection)* I will tell the hon. Member –

Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo): They have the same effect on us as they have on the electorate!

2370 **Hon. V Daryanani:** That's right.

2375 Mr Speaker, the Fair Trading Act is something that is totally separate. It has nothing to do with this legislation on the BID. Being a lawyer, he should know that that is a separate Act. It has nothing to do with this new legislation. This is going to be a new legislation; it is not something that we are putting together with the Fair Trading Act. The Fair Trading Act has nothing to do with Main Street on its own, so really you are not assisting me in any way. *(Laughter and banging on desks)*

Adjournment

2380 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Speaker, to ensure that none of us get any more tetchy than it appears some think that we are and others have suggested that they are, I would propose that we come back tomorrow, tetchy or otherwise, at 3 p.m. to continue with questions.

Mr Speaker: I now propose the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Thursday, 20th February at 3 p.m.

I now put the question, which is that this House do now adjourn to Thursday, 20th February at 3 p.m. Those in favour? **(Members: Aye.)** Those against? Passed.

2385 The House will now adjourn to Thursday, 20th February at 3 p.m.

The House adjourned at 7.25 p.m.